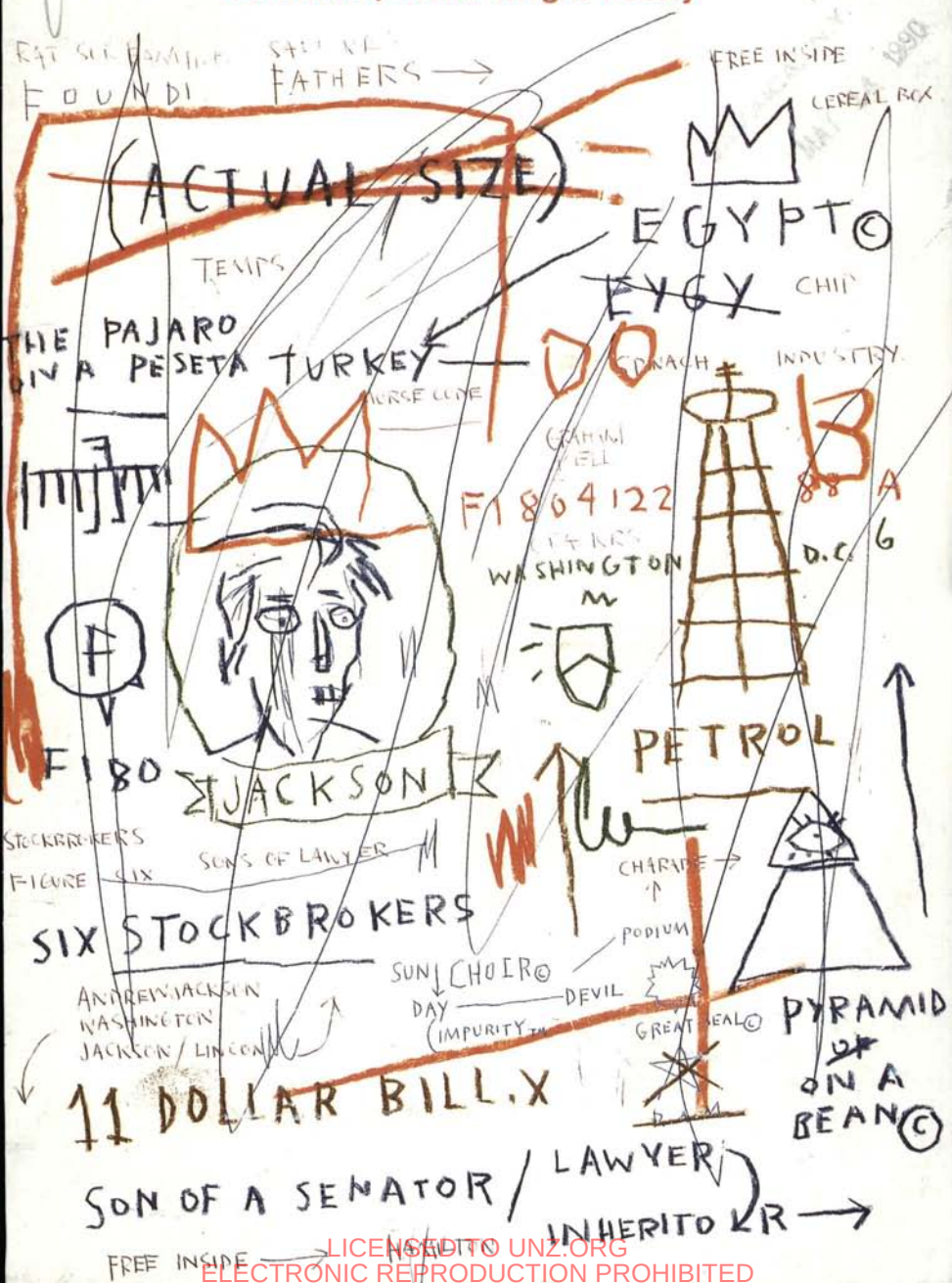


114

\$6.00 £3 50F

Nathalie Sarraute, Mary Lee Settle Interviews
Peter Matthiessen, Paul West Fiction
John Ash, Franz Wright Poetry



ELAINE

LOVES

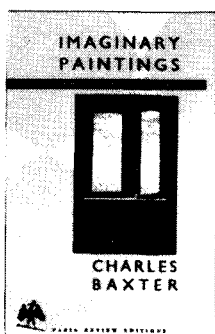
THE PARIS REVIEW

ELAINE'S

**1703 SECOND AVE
NEW YORK CITY**

reservations: 534-8103/8114

poetry from Paris Review Editions



■ ■ ■ **Imaginary Paintings**

by Charles Baxter

"I read *Imaginary Paintings* with intense pleasure. This is poetry of the first order, characterized by an anguished, almost inconsolable lyricism, utterly immersed in the life that is, a life that tends to be ignored in our art, whatever the form."

—Jim Harrison

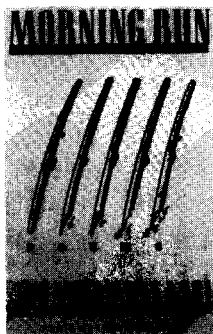
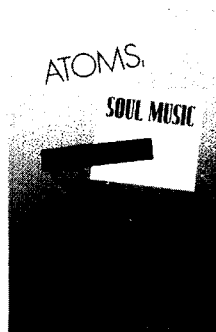
Available February 1990 / \$7.95 paper

■ ■ ■ **Atoms, Soul Music and other poems**

by Baron Wormser

"Wormser's writing encompasses large ideas, yet it is concrete, musical, alive to its nerve-ends. This book is an answer to those who say that contemporary poetry doesn't speak of important matters or that it is obscure." —Louis Simpson

Fall 1989 / \$14.95 cloth, \$7.95 paper



■ ■ ■ **Morning Run**

by Jonathan Galassi

"Jonathan Galassi is very good indeed; and at certain points of concentration, there are moments of something like magic."

—Anthony Hecht

Fall 1988 / \$14.95 cloth, \$7.95 paper

BRITISH AMERICAN PUBLISHING

DISTRIBUTED BY SIMON & SCHUSTER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS



*NEW VOICES: JAMES LASDUN,
PHILLIS LEVIN & ROBERT J. LEVY*

APRIL 10, TUESDAY, 6:00 P.M.
DONNELL LIBRARY CENTER

QUINCY TROUPE

APRIL 24, TUESDAY, 6:00 P.M.
DONNELL LIBRARY CENTER

*A CELEBRATION OF
STERLING A. BROWN*

WITH GWENDOLYN BROOKS, MICHAEL S. HARPER,
JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN, WILLIAM MEREDITH,
AND SONIA SANCHEZ

MAY 1, TUESDAY, 7:00 P.M.
SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

*PHILIP APPLEMAN
& MARY JO SALTER*

MAY 8, TUESDAY, 6:00 P.M.
DONNELL LIBRARY CENTER

DONNELL LIBRARY CENTER
20 WEST 53RD STREET

SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
FIFTH AVENUE AT 89TH STREET

FOR INFORMATION CALL (212) 427-5665

THE ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS
177 EAST 87TH STREET, NY, NY 10128

BENNETT'S ANGEL

A novel

Barton A. Midwood

PARIS REVIEW EDITIONS

Isaac Bashevis Singer on Barton A. Midwood:

"I happen to know only two writers who gave the word 'humoristic freedom.' One was the Polish writer Bruno Schulz, a Jew who perished under the Nazis. The second is Barton A. Midwood, an American Jew born in 1938..."

"Midwood's comic quality is not based on tricks and puns. He sees the absurdities of our way of thinking, especially of language, the medium which is supposed to explain human actions and motivations. Words are the main instrument of every hypnotist, but Midwood ridicules the hypnosis of language, exposes its clichés, mimics the motivations and rationalizations of human behavior, the causality of our caprices and passions..."

"The discerning reader and lover of literature should follow Bart Midwood in his literary career. He is a master of dialogue. His humor is genuine, never forced. He is a comedian because he is a skeptic who doubts all human values, man's very sanity. Bart Midwood is a writer who is capable of bringing us many surprises."

Perfect Vision

"A haunting and unnerving experience... Oates recalls Henry James in her ability to explore not just surfaces and actions but connection of thoughts and feelings."

—Chicago Tribune

Also available on audio-cassette from Harper Audio
\$8.95

† JOYCE CAROL OATES

AMERICAN APPETITES

A NOVEL



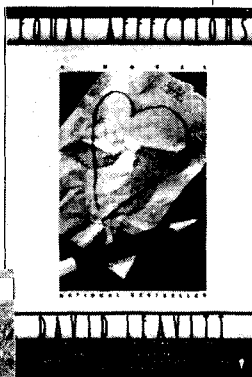
"An exploration of our most sensitive this novel is probably too much to say."
—The New York Times
"A timely examination of love, murder, and mysterious death."
—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

"Arresting family portraits, sepia-stained in their poignance and scope... Leavitt has an eloquent touch and a writer's heart."

—Boston Globe

"One of his generation's most gifted writers."
—Michiko Kakutani, New York Times

\$8.95



† LAURIE COLWIN

THE LONE PILGRIM



Author's introduction NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

"Colwin writes with such sunny skill, and such tireless enthusiasm... one reads with fascination the steps by which lovers in one story after another stumble upon their forthright declarations."

—New York Times Book Review
\$7.95

"A rewarding expedition through the back alleys and main streets of a great city and the hearts of its irrepressible citizens."

—San Francisco Chronicle
\$8.95

"This fine collection... offers a welcome introduction to a distinctive, original new voice in fiction."

—Cleveland Plain Dealer

"I'm wild for it. I wish it were three times as long."

—Edward Hoagland

\$7.95

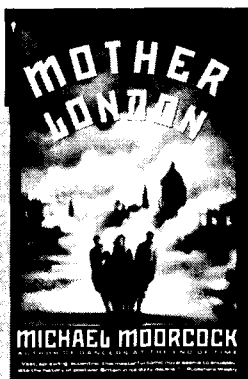
HEART SONGS



"Private doesn't merely tell her stories of melancholy at times, but connects them with every reader... these books carry right to packed with unforgettable, unforgettable stories, unforgettable stories about life in the heart of the city."
—Los Angeles Times

AND OTHER STORIES

E. ANNE PROULX



MICHAEL MOORCOCK

AUTHOR OF THE CHRONICLE OF THE CONQUEST OF THE CITY OF LONDON

There are four books in the series: 'The City of Dreadful Night', 'The City of Dreadful Night', 'The City of Dreadful Night', 'The City of Dreadful Night'. The series is available in paperback and hardcover.

PERENNIAL LIBRARY
HARPER & ROW PUBLISHERS

Available in Canada from Harper & Collins



I N D I A N A



The newest collection
from the imagination of
Michael Martone

Fort Wayne Is Seventh on Hitler's List Indiana Stories

John Barth has said that Michael Martone's stories "transform Indiana from a mere heartland into an archive of the heart." This collection of stories both new and old represents something different in American writing, what Martone calls fact and fiction, fame and obscurity. Here is a modern writer who is able to be significant, original and, above all, fun to read. Included are stories from *Alive and Dead in Indiana*.

cloth **\$20.00** • paper **\$9.95**

"Michael Martone writes with deep affection for the ordinary. In his hands, the quotidian dreams of the American heartland are transformed and quietly exalted."

—**Louise Erdrich**

"Michael Martone's work is original and important."

—**John Hawkes**

and about writing

NOW IN PAPERBACK!

Being and Race

Black Writing since 1970

By **Charles Johnson**

paperback \$ **7.95**

cloth **\$20.00**

The Ink of Melancholy

*Faulkner's Novels from
The Sound and the Fury
to Light in August*

By **André Bleikasten**

cloth **\$37.50**

At bookstores, or direct from

INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS

Dept. A2HC • 10th & Morton Sts. • Bloomington, IN 47405

Credit card orders may call toll-free 1-800-842-6796

JOHN L'HEUREUX



COMEDIANS



STORIES BY THE AUTHOR OF *A WOMAN RUN MAD*

"Comedians is a treasure . . . L'Heureux's prose is fascinating and elegantly powerful. It's a strange, witty, sexy book that's both wonderful and impossible . . . impossible to put down."

—Cleveland Plain Dealer

"His Flannery O'Connor-like moral tales expose the perverse secrets hidden in our hearts . . . L'Heureux lightens his profoundly serious spiritual load with witty, buoyant prose and an ironic, urbane sensibility."

—Publishers Weekly

At bookstores now

Sewanee Writers' Conference

**July 17-29, 1990
University of the South
Sewanee, Tennessee**

Workshops in Poetry, Fiction, and Playwriting.

Peter Davison
Ellen Douglas
Mona Van Duyn
Marianne Gingher
Emily Grosholz

Wendy Hammond
Tina Howe
John T. Irwin
Donald Justice
Andrew Lytle
Charles Martin

Tim O'Brien
Monroe Spears
Robert Stone
Peter Taylor
Jarvis Thurston

Additional writers, critics, editors,
and agents will take part.

Fellowships and Scholarships available.

WYATT PRUNTY, DIRECTOR

For information write or call:

William Clarkson, Associate Director,
SEWANEE WRITERS' CONFERENCE, 310t St. LUKE's HALL
SEWANEE, TN 37375 — (615) 598-1141



TELLUS #23
"THE VOICES OF PAUL
BOWLES"

This audio portrait of the composer, musicologist and author includes *Alla!* and other stories narrated by Bowles, early compositions and more. Guest editor: Steven Frailey.

TELLUS is an audio cassette series published by Harvestworks, Inc., NYC. This issue is co-published by the Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, Columbus, OH. For information and ordering, please call (212)-431-1130.

"The great gift is the passion for reading. It is cheap, it consoles, it distracts, it excites, it gives knowledge of the world and experience of a wide kind. It is a moral illumination."

—Elizabeth Hardwick,
in *The Paris Review*

Subscribe!

Voices of the Twentieth Century

The Writer's Mind (Vol. II)

Interviews with American Authors

by Irv Broughton

This continuing collection of interviews explores the writer's creative self—how a writer thinks, feels, and dreams. The second of three volumes, *The Writer's Mind (Vol II)* includes thirteen conversations on everything from literary history to the dynamics of a writer's life and art with novelists, screenwriters, poets, and short story writers from Isaac Asimov to Richard Wilbur.

\$29.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper

Available at fine bookstores or direct from



ARKANSAS

The University of Arkansas Press
1-800-525-1823

• Fayetteville 72701
FAX 501-575-6044

RECIPIENT OF 1989 GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Witness presents
a special Winter 1989 issue:
Nature Writing

Guest Editor
Thomas Lyon

Contributors will include

Rick Bass
Charles Bowden
Jean Craighead George
John Hay
Edward Hoagland
Barry Lopez
Sherman Paul
Doug Peacock
Gary Snyder
John Tallmadge
Stephen Trimble
Terry Tempest Williams

■ ■ ■

Call for Manuscripts

Witness invites the submission of memoirs, essays, fiction, poetry, interviews, photography, and artwork for a special 1990 issue on **Sports in America**. *Deadline: June 1, 1990.*

W I T N E S S

31000 Northwestern Highway
Suite 200
Farmington Hills, MI 48018

Individuals
1 yr/4 issues \$16
2 yrs/8 issues \$28

Institutions
1 yr/4 issues \$22
2 yrs/8 issues \$40

POETRY

October-November 1989
A Special Double Issue Featuring

ITALIAN POETRY SINCE WORLD WAR II

Edited with Paolo Cherchi

•

Previously unpublished and newly translated work by

EUGENIO MONTALE	PIER PAOLO PASOLINI
EDOARDO SANGUINETI	PAOLO RUFFILLI
ANDREA ZANZOTTO	MARICA LAROCCHI
SANDRO PENNA	FABIO DOPLICHER
VITTORIO SERENI	VALERIO MAGRELLI
LUCIANO ERBA	ANNALISA CIMA
GIORGIO CAPRONI	MARIO SANTAGOSTINI
GIOVANNI GIUDICI	PATRIZIA CAVALLI
AMELIA ROSSELLI	UMBERTO PIERSANTI
GIOVANNI RABONI	RODOLFO DI BIASIO
BARTOLO CATTAFI	MILO DE ANGELIS
MARIO LUZI	CESARE VIVIANI

AND OTHERS

•

Translated by

Beverly Allen, John Frederick Nims, Charles Tomlinson,
Dana Gioia, Charles Wright, Stephen Sartarelli, Judith Baumel,
William Jay Smith, Jonathan Galassi, Lawrence Venuti,
Michael Palma, Felix Stefanile, W. S. DiPiero, David Stivender
and J. D. McClatchy

•

\$6 per copy • Inquire about special discount for classroom use:
POETRY • 60 West Walton Street • Chicago, Illinois 60610

Gettysburg

The Gettysburg Review

Special Issue
Winter 1990



Cherub by Sarah Raphael

A Focus on Poetry

Featuring a Special Section on James Wright:
With never before published juvenilia by Wright and
Essays by E.L. Doctorow and Peter Stitt.

Poetry, Fiction, and Other Essays by:
Pattiann Rogers, Stephen Dobyns, Linda Pastan, Philip
Levine, Debora Greger, Paul Mariani, Jane Somerville,
Michael Heffernan, Peter Klappert, Floyd Collins, Gary
Fincke, and others.

Paintings by British Artist Sarah Raphael.

Best New Journal • Best Journal Design
(*Conference of Editors of Learned Journals*)

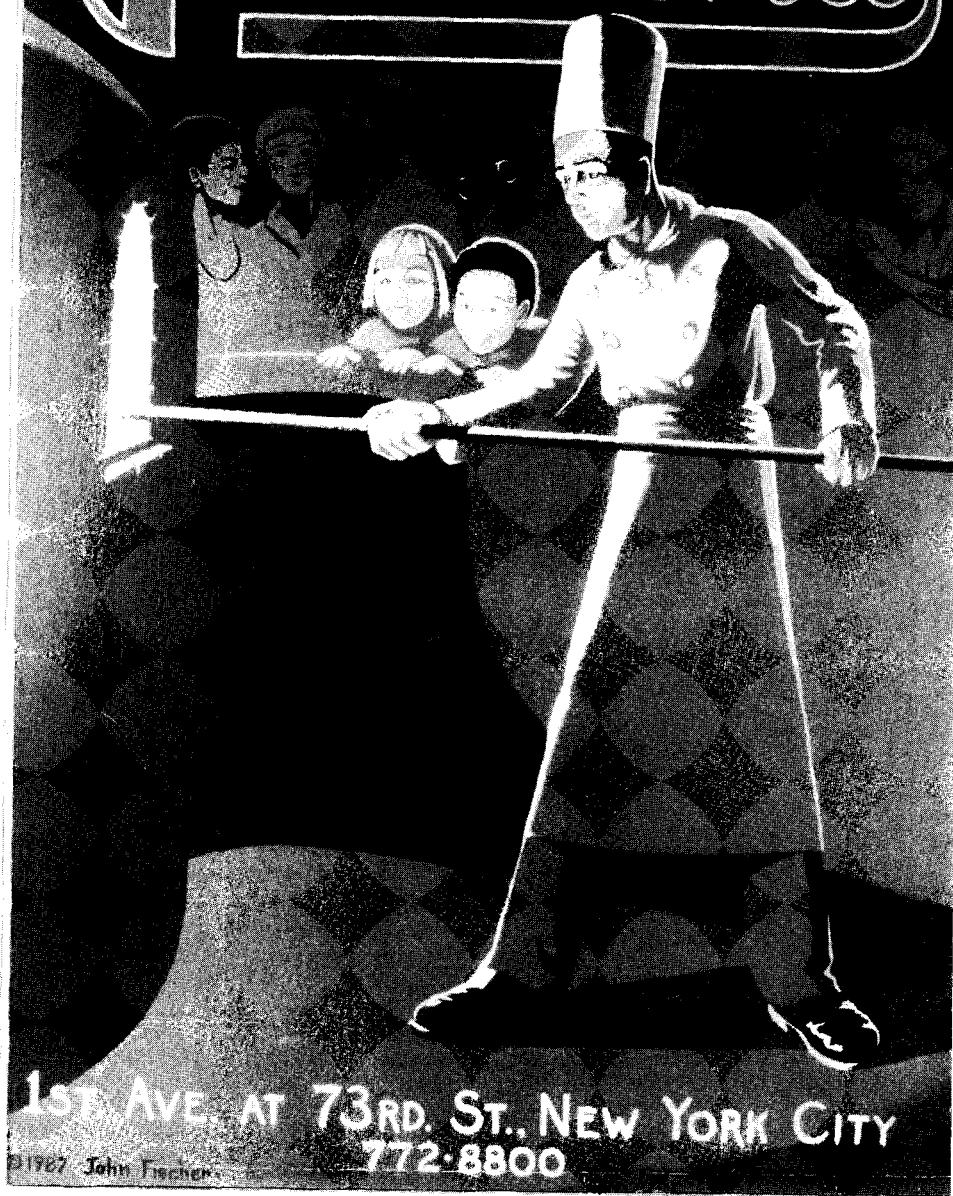
Only \$5.00 per copy
(\$4.00 for magazine
and \$1.00 postage
and handling)

Or subscribe for a full year
(four issues)
for only \$12.00
(add \$4.00 for foreign
address)

Send check, money order, or
credit card information
(account number, expiration date,
signature)
Visa and MasterCard only please.

The Gettysburg Review
Gettysburg College
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
17325-1491

Petaluma



1ST AVE. AT 73RD. ST., NEW YORK CITY
772-8800

©1987 John Fischer

The Paris Review

<i>Publisher</i>	Deborah S. Pease
<i>Editors</i>	George A. Plimpton, Peter Matthiessen, Donald Hall, Robert B. Silvers, Blair Fuller, Maxine Groffsky
<i>Managing Editor</i>	James Linville
<i>Editor-at-Large</i>	Jeanne McCulloch
<i>Associate Editors</i>	Antonio Weiss, Beth Drenning
<i>Assistant Editor</i>	Julie Mardin, Charles Rogers
<i>Poetry Editor</i>	Patricia Storace
<i>Art Editor</i>	Richard Marshall
<i>Paris Editor</i>	Harry Mathews
<i>London Editor</i>	Shusha Guppy
<i>Business Manager</i>	Lillian von Nickern
<i>Print Directors</i>	Christopher Lightfoot Walker, Libby Reid
<i>Special Consultant</i>	Robert Phillips
<i>Contributing Editors</i>	William Plummer, Patsy Southgate, Lucas Matthiessen, Joanie McDonnell, Charles Russell, David Michaelis, Ron Bailey, Helen Bartlett, Robert Becker, Joanna Laufer, Lindley Boegehold, John Glusman, Gerald Howard, Tom Jenks, Mary Maguire, Michael Sagalyn, Ileene Smith, Dan Max
<i>Editorial Assistants</i>	Rose Styron, Jill Fox, Mary B. Lumet, Kevin Richardson, Matthew Rose, Jill Birdsall, Michele Somerville, Jennifer Egan, Cheryl Sucher, Elise Paschen, Margaret Broucek, Adam Begley, Ian Ganassi, Priscilla Corbin, Julia Myer, Susannah Hunnewell, Kip Azzoni, Daniel Ellen, J.P. Whelan, Dini von Mueffling, Elif Sinanoglu
<i>Advisory Editors</i>	Nelson Aldrich, Patrick Bowles, Joan Dillon, William Pène du Bois, Drue Heinz, John Train, Harold L. Humes, Ben Johnson, Jonathan Miller, John Phillips, Thomas H. Guinzburg, Lawrence M. Bensky, Frederick Seidel, Terry Southern, Max Steele, Philip Roth, William Styron, Eugene Walter, Christopher Cerf, Tom Clark, Ron Padgett, Maggie Paley, Fayette Hickox, Molly McKaughan, Francine du Plessix Gray, Lindy Guinness, Hallie Gay Walden, David Robbins, David Evanier, Mona Simpson, Jonathan Galassi, Jonathan Dee
<i>Consultants</i>	Squaw Valley Community of Writers, Timothy Dickinson
<i>Founding Publisher</i>	Sadrudin Aga Khan
<i>Former Publishers</i>	Bernard F. Connors, Ron Dante

The Paris Review is published quarterly by The Paris Review, Inc. Vol. 32, No. 114, Spring 1990. Office: 45-39 171 Place, Flushing, New York 11358 (ISSN #0031-2037). Paris Office: Harry Mathews, 67 rue de Grenelle, Paris 75007 France. London Office: Shusha Guppy, 8 Shawfield St., London, SW3. Distributors in the U.S.A.: Eastern News Company, Sandusky, OH. Typeset and printed in USA by Capital City Press, Montpelier, VT.

Price for single issue in USA: \$6.00; in France: 50F; in the UK: £3. Post-paid subscription for four issues \$20, for eight issues \$40, for twelve issues \$60, lifetime Associate \$1000. Postal surcharge of \$6.00 per four issues outside USA (excluding life subscriptions). Subscription card is bound within magazine. Please give six weeks notice of change of address using subscription card.

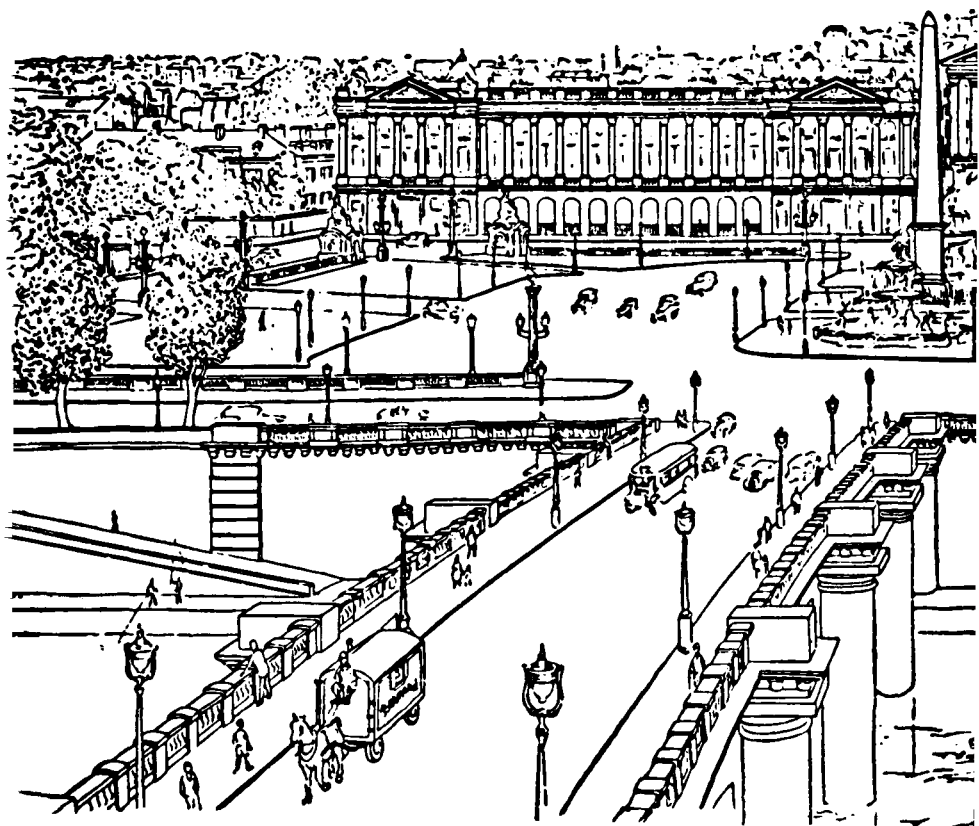
Fiction manuscripts should be submitted to George Plimpton, poetry to Patricia Storace c/o The Paris Review, 541 East 72nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10021. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by addressed envelope and stamps or international postage coupons.

Charter member of the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines.

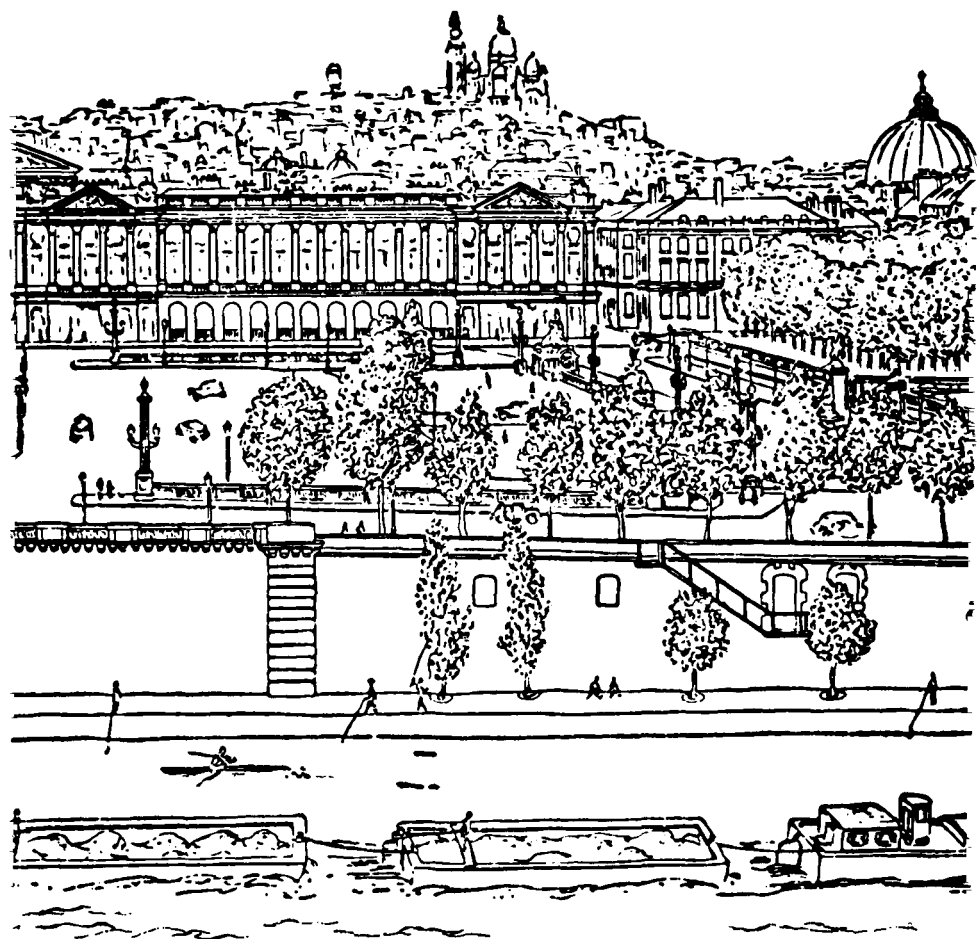
This publication is made possible, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Second Class postage paid at Flushing, New York, and at additional mailing office.

The Paris Review



45-39 171 Place
Flushing, New York 11358



Eastern News Distributors, Inc.
1130 Cleveland Road
Sandusky, Ohio 44870



Frontispiece by William Pène du Bois.

Cover by Jean Michel Basquiat, *Untitled*, 1983, crayon, oil stick and ink on paper.

Table of contents illustration by Ashley Bickerton, *Good*, 1989, silkscreen.

Number 114

	Interviews	
Nathalie Sarraute	<i>The Art of Fiction CXV</i>	152
Mary Lee Settle	<i>The Art of Fiction CXVI</i>	44
	Features	
Robie Macauley	<i>Silence, Exile, and Cunning</i>	200
	Fiction	
Stuart Dybek	<i>Nighthawks</i>	127
Peter Matthiessen	<i>from Killing Mr. Watson</i>	89
Christoph Ransmayr	<i>from The Last World</i>	98
Paul West	<i>Night in Whitechapel</i>	20
Larry Woiwode	<i>Summer Storms</i>	191
	Art	
Meyer Vaisman	<i>Untitled</i>	111
	Poetry	
John Ash	<i>Scenes From Schumann</i>	84
Stephen Dunn	<i>Two Poems</i>	118
Thomas Frick	<i>Sleep</i>	83
Suzanne Gardinier	<i>Dear Sam, Taken by the Adoption Agency</i>	185
Melissa Green	<i>The Consolation of Boethius</i>	86
Brenda Hillman	<i>Autumn Moon</i>	38
David Mamet	<i>Two Men</i>	43
Donna Masini	<i>At the Bandshell by the River</i>	125
Sandra McPherson	<i>The Thorn-Shaver on Fifth</i>	123
Karen Murai	<i>Three Poems</i>	188
Bin Ramke	<i>The Center for Atmospheric Research</i>	218
Christopher Reid	<i>Caretaking</i>	121
Mark Rudman	<i>The Nowhere Water</i>	186
Joe Sheerin	<i>Four Poems</i>	78
Franz Wright	<i>Three Poems</i>	220
	Notes on Contributors	223

NOTICE

Sharp-eyed subscribers may have noticed that, according to the spines of their copies, 1989 did not appear to have an autumn. The notation jumps from Summer 1989 to Winter 1989 leaving out Fall altogether. This was, of course, a copy-editing error, not an attempt to elude our responsibilities to provide subscribers with four issues a year. This mistake led to the problem of what to put on the spine of the issue succeeding. We finally settled on Winter II, like Rocky II. This put us back on track. The spine of this issue should read Spring 1990. Apologies to those who thought their autumns had vanished.

Another matter: folded into Winter II were copies of an appeal to subscribers typed up on my grandfather's Underwood, an ancient machine I use which has a tendency to lift an occasional letter above its partners on line so that the finished copy has a rather unkempt look. To use this machine for the flier was intentional. The idea was that those who read the letter — an appeal to re-subscribe or give subscriptions as gifts — would feel sorry for an enterprise using such primitive equipment and would come to its aid, much as one throws money into a beggar's tattered hat on a sidewalk. It didn't work. Only four new subscriptions came in. Also a letter from my mother advising me to get rid of my grandfather's typewriter.

This spring, a very large (by our standards) mailing drive to solicit subscribers will be underway. It has been prepared by

professionals. The typography is exact. The message is enticing and bold. The advertising agency has even included a balloon with the *Paris Review* logo (an eagle clutching a pen) in the package. We have been assured that the balloon will be more effective than a sloppy mailing piece off my grandfather's Underwood.

Two other items are worthy of note: *The Writer's Chapbook*, a volume of selections culled from the *Review's* craft of writing series with an emphasis on subject (Plot, Character, Writer's Block, Artificial Stimulants, etc.) instead of author, has been published by Viking. W. W. Norton has published the *Paris Review Anthology*, a hefty three-pounder with the best from over thirty-five years of the *Paris Review's* publishing career. The *Chapbook* came out in Winter I, the *Anthology* in Winter II. Both can be found, or at least ordered, from your local bookstore. Both are essential for those readers who neglected, or were too young, to start their subscriptions in 1953 when this publication began.

As usual, my calling card is affixed below for anyone who wishes to make use of it.

	GEORGE A. PLIMPTON Editor THE PARIS REVIEW 541 East 72nd St. New York, N.Y. 10021 (212) UN 1-0016
--	---

SUBSCRIPTION FORM	1 ENCLOSE # _____ PAYMENT FOR:
	☐ 4 ISSUES/\$20.00
	☐ 8 ISSUES/\$40.00
	☐ LIFE SUBSCRIPTION/\$1000.00
	NAME _____
	ADDRESS _____
CITY _____	
STATE _____	ZIP _____

Night in Whitechapel

Paul West

Three were we. We were three. Roaming the night. In our stagecoach. Netley, he drove. Sickert charmed them, Sickert the painter, charmed the whores, up to us, from the streets. I lulled them, one by one, to easy death, with poisoned grapes, then opened them, sliced with knives, I William Gull, the Crown's physician. We three frightened, we ordinary three, a whole century. To oblige Victoria, whose helpless grandson, little Prince Eddy, married a slut. In sordid secret. Four women knew. Four women died. At our hands. I lopped innards. To a clip-clop. A bloody trinity. We were that. Serving the Queen. The blackmail coach. The Ripper team. Sent our letter. To the Press. Address: "From Hell." No, another place. Then we stopped. Grapes, knives, coach. All three gone. All three men. All four women. No one caught. Much too clever. To be famous. London loved us.

*

No carriage could come bursting through the wrought-iron gates alongside Number 74; it would have to come along the

street, and it did, advancing quite slowly, quietly, the dumpy figure of Netley muffled up against the night's warmth as if he paid the weather no heed but lived in a climate of his own, unreachable, unswayable. This, Sickert thought, was likely to be the only expedition, granted a little luck in finding the women. The only snag was likely to be Marie Kelly, who had made a habit of never being where she was supposed to be. As he stood there, after nodding curtly to Netley, who was uninclined to speak, Sickert had one of those wonderful bits of awareness that kept him sane: he was still in his twenties, his late twenties to be sure, and much of his life was before him, full of wonders, triumphs, and masterpieces; he could ask no more of life, and the very idea was going to see him through tonight, just so long as he believed in himself. In a way, he was privileged, called to Royal Duty just before midnight, with one of the most famous physicians in the land. Part of him chilled, though, at the mind's-eye image of Gull, who would have no idea how well-equipped Sickert was against attempts on his person, that preposterous chance sired by suspicion upon sheer nerves. Slid down his stocking, point aimed toward his shoe, a long, somewhat ornamental dagger (a painting prop) cooled his shin, just in case, although back in the studio, much to his surprise, he had discovered, in a nondescript old mahogany brown doctor's bag, used mainly for discarded paints, a metal case about eight inches long and two inches wide with, nestling melodiously against one another, three sharp surgical knives within: an heirloom, a curio, a piece of flotsam from Denmark or Germany, perhaps, unearthed from the basement of a cabin trunk, proof that there was once a doctor in the family, back in the old Schleswig-Holstein days at Flensburg. An odd, unkind smile crossed Sickert's face; he was thinking that the knife case had seemed to come from the very name, from the Flens- part at least, as if concepts could generate things. He had no time to pursue the notion as Gull came quietly out, descending the steps without looking; he too dressed for February although it was August thirtieth. Was there a sudden cold that only Sickert could not feel? There was rain in the air, but nothing untoward beyond that. An umbrella would have sufficed.

Off they went to the East End without a word spoken. Gull hunched bulkily in his seat, perhaps humming under his breath; if he had brought anything with him — sketch, photograph, document for the women to sign — it was buried in the folds of his enormous dark overcoat, and Sickert sighed — he had been hoping for a glimpse of Lady Gull, or of the daughter: a skirl of girlish laughter to reassure him, a final peck from the adoring wife. There in the semi-darkness he sat with the skull-puncturer, the vivisectionist, the *maître d'* of the loony-bin, who threatened others into joining him on unholy missions in what would soon be the dead of night, except for the class of woman on whose track they were. Out of sheer nerves, Sickert was swinging his foot, quite into the rhythm of it, until Gull leaned toward him and tapped his knee with something hard and angular, in a silent *please*, and Sickert could think only: Out of all the painters in London, he has chosen me; out of all the doctors in London, he has been chosen to see to this. Lord knows what the night will bring. He was glad of the knife, though if he could get it out fast enough he was uncertain; in the gloom he felt for it, making a slight crouch as if to adjust his sock, and there it was, like a cripple's brace.

Netley, of course, had already been at work in the East End, touring and scanning, parking the coach and moving in and out of the pubs, asking discreet questions, then pretending to be drunk, doing an occasional reel, knowing his job, and certain that everything he did endeared him at the other end of society. Midnight, he personally thought, was too early to catch the women at their trade, but it was a good hour to catch those released from the local jail, among whom, surely, would be a couple of the women on their list. Whom they found first made no difference to him, but he wished with all the force of his distorted heart that his friends were with him to give him a hand: any one of the roughnecks the Palace used for its backstairs work. One pair of legs, he thought, but it's a tribute to me, really; I'm the best pair of legs in London, my second name, my middle name, is Please the Gentlemen: *Plysergen-nermun*. If the women from the jail were the wrong ones, and his earlier inquiries had just about established that this was

so (though the police made mistakes and some of the women used assumed names, especially those new to the game), it was going to be a long night, all the way into dawn, unless they packed it in early. So: the police station check, followed by a lot of fishing at random. He sighed at this unsatisfactory work, wishing he could be safely tucked up in the Cleveland Street brothel with Prince Eddy or some other gentleman favorite; but it was not to be. It'll rain or go dark before morning, he told himself with all the weight and wisdom of the ages. Imagine him wanting all that muslin, yards of it. I know what he wants it for, but wild horses would never make me say, unless they was tugging separate halves of me in different directions. Then I'd blab. He preferred princes to doctors any time. But this was the princes' doctor, and fidgety Walt Sickert, the old mastermind at work again, but out of his depth in this, here only as an observer, a spotter. If only young Walt had left things alone, Netley thought, but he was too eager to get involved in a nice bit of slumming. They all were. Whatever they didn't have, they wanted it, as if it was the biggest diamond in the world. They wanted all the diseases they couldn't catch; they didn't want the ones they had. When he, John Charles Netley, got where he wanted to be, well-placed that is, he wouldn't be like them; he would remember what it had been like to be on the other side of the fence, and he would want only the old things, he would want to be rid of only the old things. The trouble with toffs, not that he would ever tell them this, was that they didn't know when they were well off. They needed to drive a cab for a year or two, cleaning it and oiling it; they might think they wanted it, but they wouldn't know they didn't, really, until they had to do it. It was their way of doodling their thumbs, their well-manicured thumbs; and, in Cleveland Street, at Number 19, they wanted a little whipping, pretending they wanted to be hurt, but they didn't know what hurt was. They wouldn't want *that*, not a real full-blast out-and-out flogging such as he had enjoyed when he was a boy, and the salt on the cuts afterward, some of it even in his eyes. Why didn't they all *come off it*, all this pretending? He Netley knew how to see to them, but he loathed them

while doing it, especially those who liked to call themselves Masons, who did everything by numbers and silly little routines, the truth being that they liked doing people down, doing them in, just to show they had the power. How many of your poor were Masons? None. It might just be a good idea to imitate them a bit, he thought, even if you didn't feel the urge to do what they did; after all a bit of that power might rub off. If you behaved like a Mason, you might end up feeling like one. Uninvited, but one on the quiet.

All three of them were familiar with low life, Gull not recently, not since his walks in Whitechapel, so he was looking out with unsimulated curiosity and no small satisfaction, delighted to see life bringing so many so low after midnight: reeling about and vomiting, falling over and dragging themselves along on hands and knees, squabbling and wrestling one another, screaming and chasing, embracing and fondling. This was the life of the flesh he had heard so much about. It was like watching a disease: pullulating purulence. "You look too," he told Sickert curtly, and Sickert asked himself silently *Who? For what?* Not a face looked familiar. And so the first hour passed. They paused to relieve their bladders, then set off again, cruising, patrolling, going quite slowly, the real authority on who was who being Netley, who seemed to drive without even looking where he was going, such was his interest in the chore, his mind on the muslin, his heart set on Prince Eddy, whose body smelled of chrysanthemums, his memory on being thrashed. They were looking for a whisper, they were listening for a face, Gull with his flask of hot milk and his deftly wrapped sandwiches cut into bite-sized portions, two salmon, two crab, two roast beef, Sickert with his hip flask of cognac, Netley (out of sight) with his canister of cold fried fish, from which his gloved hands had an invisible sheen.

By two in the morning they had all begun to yawn and were on the point of giving up. One last tour, Gull sighed, and Netley cracked his whip, wishing himself erect in one of the sentry-boxes outside Buckingham Palace, with a large quiet bloodhound sniffing at the odd aroma of tallow and vinegar that came from his groin. Only the night air as it cooled kept

them awake. Sickert felt lulled by the coach's motion, and even Gull seemed to be rocking gently, not so much lulled as out cold. Ever since his stroke he had found sleep the easiest of chores; he slept too much, which was no doubt why sleep never refreshed him, or so he claimed.

Once again, Polly Nichols had staggered back to the doss house from the Frying Pan, all the way along Brick Lane, bumping into the walls, only to be turned away for not having the fourpence required. "My God," she screamed, "that's not much more than you get for stitching a dozen tennis aprons. No bovver. I'll be back. I'll soon have me doss money, look at me new bonnet, look at me jolly bonnet." It was black straw trimmed with velvet, rather somber and stately, though she spoke as if she thought it was a pleaser, likely to ensnare a bonnet-fancying gent along the road. She still wore the boots with uppers cut and steel clippits on the heels: men's boots that gave her a heavy, almost menacing walk, short as she was. On she reeled to the Whitechapel Road, wishing she had stayed at home, such as it was, instead of boasting "I've had me doss money three times today already, and gone and drunk the bleeder." Now, who had asked her, in the small hours, to call it a night? Ellen Holland, also of 18 Thrawl Street, who called after her "It's half past two, darling, hear the clock?" That had been at the corner of Whitechapel Road and Osborn Street, where she had stood for a while, fingering one of the buttons on her brown ulster, trying to detect, as if blind, the figure of the female riding the horse and the restraining man at her side, a feel at another better form of life. She had almost fallen asleep standing up, then, out of habit, had begun to walk again, aimed nowhere in particular, but determined to gain her fourpence without walking much farther. It was better to be inside with Marie Kelly, writing another stupid letter, than rambling about here in the unpeopled night. Could she, perhaps, find Ellen Holland again, or Marie, and borrow fourpence, promise to be a good girl tomorrow and go and earn it. She actually took a step backward when someone addressed her out of the gloom, and from what seemed low down:

"Good evening, my dear. This is no night for a lovely woman

to be walking out alone. May I entice you to a little company?" Prodded by Gull, Sickert stepped down, still aghast that Netley had at last recognized somebody; half in, half out, as the universe swirled about him, making him dizzy in spite of his sleepiness, he made a token bow and removed his hat, sweeping it low, then motioning in the same movement at the open door behind him. The horse coughed while Polly Nichols hesitated, still unwilling to put herself out for fourpence when perhaps she could borrow it, but enticed by the toff, the coach, the vision of mid-morning nicety, plus the thought that they would drop her off later and she would not have to go up Brick Lane again. "Well, madam, will you? These are dark days to be alone. May we offer you a lift to your destination, even if nothing else?" She was overcome by this surfeit of courtesy. Women did get murdered as they walked the nighttime streets, that Martha Tabram only a few weeks ago. "Ah, good," Sickert sighed, doing his job deftly, helping her up and into the company of Gull. Netley started the horse up and Gull at once, after she had settled her skirts on the thick muslin, offered the bunch of poisoned grapes, a touch of even finer finesse.

If she had sat or posed for him, not to mention anything else, he did not remember her face; he chose them for their bodies anyway, and here in the gloom, poorer far than the broken light of the street, she was a generic woman of the lower orders, declining the grapes until, once again, Sickert glossed the invitation, explaining how refreshing they could be on a steamy summer's night, but they were sorry, they had no wine. The absence of wine seemed to hearten her, for she at once accepted a grape, chewed it, took another, appeared to falter, then, with befuddled regality, began to slump sideways even as Gull reached forward to steady her, moved somewhat behind her, and wiped his palm across her throat with scarcely a sound, and then Sickert knew what had been done as Gull let out a short bark, heaved his enormous bulk upon her as if to rape, began to drag her clothing away from her stomach and thighs, his knife a clean flash as he got to work, his hands a pudgy flurry, not a sound from the woman other than that

of air as he, Sickert, sat dumbstruck; it had all been so fast. He was in a cab rolling gently through the London streets while Sir William Withey Gull operated, as rarely, upon another human form, once known (he fumbled) as Mary Ann Nichols, otherwise known as Polly. Had she recognized *him* in the gaslight and, soothed by that old memory even without remembering his name, entered the coach? He would never know, nor would she. Here indeed was something to paint. Was that why Salisbury had chosen him? The one thing he did not remember at all was the commandment against murder.

So shocked by what Gull had done, and by the speed with which he did it, Sickert felt numb, as if nothing at all had happened and Polly Nichols were still in her initial phase of gratitude: a cockney tart being fussed over as if she were a lady of quality entering a zone of safety, the first time in her life anyone had acted toward her with such amicable chivalry: Why, she had thought, I wouldn't dream of saying no, not when asked, not when they put it to me straight, I would always rather ride than walk, my bonny lad, little door swung open, big toff in black satin and fancy tie just waiting for me to get up there among them like I was the Queen of the May, and then, my goodness, another toff, as I sort of made sure it would be, offering me some grapes although not a bottle between them, johnnies out on the town, their lady wives at home with their feet up reading big fat books, and I says to myself, no doubt they'll be wanting some favor or other with me skirts all hoicked up, a look or a feel, they have funny needs some of them, and who am I to say no, it wouldn't be one or even two of your fourpenny uprights, no fear, it would be top-drawer slap and tickle, my loves, it was the new straw bonnet as did it, fetched them over to me at once like a beacon at sea, and all they could think of was how can we get our plates of meat on that? If only I didn't feel so drowsy, so drowned and done, can't have been the wine, there was no wine, there was only me, the toffs, the grapes that did it, I am falling and nobody to hold me, right into the ship's wake all froth and a face in front of me, not the johnny at the door, the other one, not so kind, older, he has an arm around me for what I will never

know, out of the frying pan, oh yes, and then some whispering, I am biting my tongue, I have to, it tickles when he. Gull had severed the windpipe, the gullet, and the spinal cord in one predatory flash, although having to start twice on the left in his motion from behind to the right, and then he opened up the abdomen and made a couple of knife-thrusts into her private parts out of spite or impatience, and Netley was already clattering away to Bucks Row in Whitechapel, where he and Sickert removed her from the cab and set her on her back, with her clothes a little above her knees, in a yard crossing, right under the windows of a Mrs. Green, who was a light sleeper, and opposite the room a Mrs. Purkiss slept in, and she awake at the time. Of the three watchmen in the vicinity, none heard anything; nor did any of the policemen whose beats were nearby. The phantom cab trotted up, disgorged, and moved off into the balmy night, past the slaughterhouses and their usual noise. It was a quarter to four when Police Constable Neil, whose face was to achieve fame in the *Illustrated Police News*, found the body, about three quarters of a mile from where she had last been seen.

Sickert felt his face blazing from shock, surprise, and indignation, but Gull, hunched up around the center of himself, looked no different and was not even breathing heavily. Lightning striking would have seemed slower. It was as if a snake had uncoiled, and Sickert had removed the body in a trance, knowing it did not belong on the blood-soaked muslin, knowing it should be in the open air of the night, knowing it was too late to intercede (there had been no space in time to intercede *in*). This was a man who had done all his thinking beforehand, for whom all that remained was to act with a knife hitherto unseen, hauled up from the scabbard of his being, wielded with professional flair in the gloom of the cab, as private a deed as anything done that night in London. At a tap from within, Netley paused long enough for Sickert to leave the cab and vomit, messing his toffed-up jacket in the process, after which he stumbled back in and stared at Gull, expecting—what? Explanation, apology, a bout of weeping? Nothing came from him, from the man who had converted medical

care into medical bedlam, the certification of the insane into certification of the sane as insane, and then stretched his idea of mutilation to extend to disembowelment. Sickert had no idea what to do next, other than keep quiet. Here he was, blackmailed into being an accessory to murder in a moving cab, and for some insensate reason not enough of him was protesting, the whole thing had become a matter of interest, as if an omnibus had run over a cat. The world went on, and, Sickert was amazed to discover, it was possible to go on thinking; it was possible to have thoughts quite unrelated to what had just happened there in Gull's private abattoir, no doubt with police approval, and never mind how vague Lord Salisbury had been. There went one unfortunate who would never again sign a letter to her Queen, the only remaining question being what Gull was going to do next. Was this the shock, after which there would only be tongue-lashings, or would the other letter-writing whores go the same way: graped and gutted, after being deceived with courtesy and fancy chivalry, a *show* of it anyway. How clever: one poor drab, Emma Smith, had been mutilated already, though not by Gull, who perhaps got an idea from it all the same, although he had not yet done what was done to Emma Smith, with something, not a knife, rammed into her vagina with such force it had smashed the partition between front and back passages, and she had died of peritonitis. Imagine, then, Sickert thought, women walking the streets and waiting for something similar to happen to them, and then Gull's cab arriving with a well-spoken gent inviting the woman to safety. It must have been as if a stone lion had melted into life before her eyes and dragged her down, clawing and throttling, except — he was forgetting the grapes. She no doubt died with quite friendly thoughts of Gull, whose ravening made itself plain only after she lost consciousness: he was the other gentleman in the cab, that was all, perhaps; the one whose flowery manners really had something behind them, not all gushy and smarmy like the dressed-up one. No, she could not have had time to compare, unless she did it as she climbed up and in, her credulous nature swamped by such overt hospitality, her body weary after a long hunt for

fourpence, just to rent a room with. Real gentlemen, she must have thought, like to do it in cabs, while on the move, so why had she never thought of that before? Why had no cab come down Whitechapel Road before? She must have been praising her luck, she the only woman on the prowl at that hour. She had clicked, as the saying went.

How, Sickert wondered, to get out of something this devilish. To Gull it was no doubt bread and butter, all in a day's work, but to Sickert it was an abomination, the trouble being that he found it, as he would, an *interesting* abomination, as if suddenly all his standards of behavior had washed into a sewer and he had become the young voyeur, not willing to admit to himself his interest in, his eagerness for, more of the same, but flummoxed nonetheless by not feeling an outright loathing. Some tiny shred of him held back, no doubt the accursed one, as if he had never had a mother, or a family, or had never known the pangs of love, the average tug of everyday decency, the brushed and polished norms of *Homo sapiens*. Some woman of the streets, with whom his connection had been of the faintest, had been butchered in front of his eyes, and he was wondering how Marie Kelly would respond to the news, how she would make her getaway, and not how could he report Gull to the police; if he did he would go floating across to Dieppe on the next going-out of the tide. He would therefore have to evolve some way of living with what he knew, with no scream to guide him, not a whimper of protest from the woman to bring him bolt upright at night in a shuddering sweat that no sleep could blot. How do I, he wondered. Just when should I. If I could ever. He was a painter, an observer, not a professional man of conscience. All he had done was to lift the body and dump it; no, he had inveigled the woman aboard, *that* was the culpable part, and he might have to pay dearly for it before he was thirty. When Gull fell, so would he, whereas Netley had no distance to fall, as foul a homunculus as could be.

Never would he forget the woman's convulsion as Gull slit her throat, almost like a horse falling at a fence, enervate and slack, as if the life force went out of her all at once and she

began almost to leap away from the knife sideways but had not the vim to do it with, so she shuddered and wobbled, arrested in the first motion of that shift, then sagged sacklike to the muslin beneath her, pouring blood. All this in the interior gloom had burned its way into Sickert's mind, with not a word said; Netley had made the identification, to be sure, and Gull had done the dirty work; he, Sickert, had done the honors, so to speak, and that was all. He had never known how people felt when something sucked the life force from them, that sublime bumping in the chest. *With not a word said*, he repeated: as if a spell might have been broken, we did her in, shrinking from that "we" with all his might, yet knowing it would not wash in court, if it ever came to that. Painting was a way of altering the visible world, and so was murder, but were these changes in any way alike? The artist was not a murderer, but the murderer was sometimes an artist—hadn't someone written an essay even? He could not recall, but he was willing to concede that Gull, without a syllable uttered, took pride in having dispatched her painlessly, as it seemed. Had he never seen Gull in Guy's, shoving his rods in above the eyes, he might not have been able to assimilate so well what had happened this night (had he seen Gull stuff a severed heart into his pocket in front of a corpse's sister, he might have found tonight's work a matter of routine, though). He was mingling with people who treated human flesh as pigment, life and death as a canvas, the human spine as an easel, and he could not for the life of him look away from it with all of his being: with most of it, yes, but not with the peeping bit of him. Had God seen? Had God looked? If so, what had followed from that? No more than had followed from his—Sickert's—having looked and seen. Something unjustifiable was happening in the universe and there was nothing appointed to stop it. The poor woman had been easy meat for a dab hand, out on her feet, drunk as an eel, awed by a prepossessing gent leaning out to her like the sun from the night sky, inviting her in for half an hour of three-way debauchery to the sound of clopping hooves—not a bad way for a girl to top off an unsuccessful evening of it. What if she had refused? Would

Netley have dragged her into the cab screaming? He and Gull were intent on having her, having gone to such lengths to get her, or any of her allies. It was Polly Nichols's bad luck, Sickert thought, without thinking of her name; if not tonight, then next week, sooner or later. The newspapers were going to go mad, but not yet; there would be a chance to sleep it off.

"I'm going to have to sleep it off," he told Gull, who said nothing for a while, then snapped "What have *you* done? Why, sir, you are no more than a lamp, a lamplighter. What you need to sleep off is a night's inertia. We will drop you off first, then Netley will see to the muslin. Sometimes his job is sheer boredom, but what can he expect? He lacks the mental qualifications to be a devil." He sat back and sighed, having wiped his knife and stowed it. My goodness, Sickert thought, here I was with a knife in my stocking even as he cut her up; what if, then, he had turned it on me, at my throat? I would never have been able to reach it in time. *Affix it higher up.* He knew then that he would be part of this grisly crew when it went out again, as it would have to until Gull, or somebody, was satisfied. Oh what a coach of darkness it had become, what a besmirched *Crusader* to go back among the gigs, coaches, and wagonettes in Wanstead, where Netley rented it. Sickert could see him that night with the used muslin, then with huge swaths of fresh muslin, cleansing the interior of the cab, though surely not to anything like perfection: certain flecks and scales would remain there forever, the last spoor of the poor woman, should there ever be searchers.

If ever in his life Sickert had been looking for a change, it had arrived: nothing was ever going to be the same, whether he prayed or reformed, died or lied, feigned unconsciousness or confessed in order to rid himself of the monstrous deed in the cab. It made him smaller, weaker, less his own man, but it also denatured him, joining him to the vast forgotten hordes of armies who had slaughtered and moved on, happy to set the killing at naught, so as to live on semi-sane. He had entered the category of the adult who consented, part of the theory of that category being that an adult has some power to halt such things. Well, he had halted nothing save his own mind,

and now he was not, as he sometimes thought in his old histrionic way, inching over into the barbarous, beginning to give way, crumbling in the heart of his conscience; no, he was one of the damned, he was sure of that, and being so he was eligible to go from bad to worse, deciding that it was too late to try and do what was already too late, failing to see that one foul deed need not breed successors. His innocence, whatever of it he had had, was done for now, all by someone else, while he, Sickert, had looked on, *perusing* the act, as it were, with only a vague feeling of discomfiture because he had had no idea (had he?) of what was to come in the moldy gloom of the cab's interior, with deathshad Netley up front and only the quivering, implacable Gull to go by. Had he known how Gull felt, had he been able to share the slackening of his muscles as he began to cut, and the weird sense he had of being only an amateur surgeon—a man whose hands did not do quite what his mind commanded—he might have felt less vile, as if a bungled atrocity were more forgivable than one done right. Past this, there was no casual way, not past the sudden extinguishing of Polly Nichols's commonplace, drab, episodic, destitute life, yet to her the only joyful continuum she had, the only link to the radiant wellspring of all life: the golden bubble at the godhead's heart, a life in which, truth told, she belonged more to others than to herself, one of those women released from beauty, family, sobriety, yet still good for an unromantic tumble next to the slaughterers' yard, where blindfolded horses made their last march escorted by an East End tough with a club. Polly Nichols had not shrieked out, but in Sickert's head she made a steam whistle come right from the dishevelled mess of her underwear, the loose flaps of her body's front. He would hear that sound on his dying day, and on every day in between then and now, once again as if she were a host of the downtrodden and poleaxed, her last interview with a man speaking lah-di-dah at her from cab. All had come down to a grape or two, a narrow natural focus that Sickert knew he would never be able to paint, or try to, without vomiting, the more so because he had seen the grapes at work before, half-admiring their allure and dispatch. What was it Gull

had said? He partook (*his* verb, suggesting ancientry), *he partook* of grapes or currants to keep up his strength, and now Mister Sickert partook of murder, never mind how vicarious, maybe not to keep up his strength, and no amount of education was going to rid him of that taint, no amount of love or hatred or disease or apology was going to save him from the salt-rinsed flagellation his own mind was going to administer, making him cry even when aged, more than half-dead, for transgressing, for going over so easily when he might have flung himself aside and out of the slowing cab, or attacked Gull with his ornamental dagger, asking Polly Nichols, *quick you're a heavy woman*, to put her weight on the berserk paraplegic with the surgical knife, impeding him just enough while Sickert gave him a young man's punch to the solar plexus, twenty-eight hitting seventy-two already slurred by a stroke, and then quitting the carriage after her whether Netley saw them or not, and running in sheer madness and dry-mouthed fright up any of the passages in the East End, anywhere to get away into.

If only I had, he said. Something had flowed from him, not strength but honorable ardor, down through the wheels into the defiled road, and there was no way of replacing it, no hope.

For his part, Gull felt that things had gone passing well: at least there was one voice stilled that he would not have to find room and board for, not in the mental ward, but in some little gathering like it. Odd, he mused, how remote these women were from him. He did not know them, nor they him. They were rabbits or hares, no more than that, and not as useful as the cadavers he made his career among. He felt like some Ancient of Days, hunched up there in his voluminous cloak on a windswept crag, then, as the moment came, striking without sentiment or favor while that idiot Sickert looked on in horror. He could expect little help from Sickert other than as a porter, an inviter, an identifier. Without the warm milk (though cool by the small hours of the morning) and sandwiches, he would have been hewing with an empty stomach, careless-handed and somewhat light-headed, and he wondered when these

drabs took a bath, how often, for Polly Nichols had not smelled too well. Her name he had known for the evening, having made the acquaintance of her name by being introduced to her body, so to speak, but it had gone now, and he would in all likelihood not be reading the tale of his doings in the *Illustrated Police News* or even the *Times*. Sometimes Gull's body, since the stroke, did not function as it should, and he could feel it sliding away from him at moments of command, floating out of reach as if afflicted with levity of one kind or another, almost doodling with itself while he strained to make a vowel or a cut, and not always obliging, rather like an old and refractory dog. Oh, he would get through his assignment, if that was what it was, only he hoped that those who had assigned him, thus honoring him yet again, would realize how much it was costing him to lose his sleep and have to ply his trade in the dark, in a moving vehicle, though he enjoyed the coziness, especially at first while the selected hussy was alive. Or had, so far: three to go, he reminded himself. Would Sickert stand the racket? Better that he should help than become a fifth body to take care of. Orders is orders, he smiled: here I sit in a mire of blood, thank goodness I took my coat off, a summer night, hardly a comfortable station for one of my standing, Sire, but we have to do as we are told, if only it did not take Netley so long to find the persons aforementioned, who had the temerity and insolence to address themselves thus to A and B; Lady Gull will begin to fret if this goes on too often, her amazingly strong husband wandering about in the small hours in bizarre company. It has to be. All good Masons must rally to the defense of the realm. Or something like that. Would they ever threaten Guy's? How do you threaten a hospital? One day, Netley will have to be put paid to as well, I suppose, although his zeal seems conspicuous: he would kill the Queen if she told him to do so. I could use a hearty breakfast now, three eggs and six rashers, some kidneys and tomatoes, a few sausages, for savory, lots of freshly sliced brown bread, but what can you do at four in the morning, splashed with blood? I could stop at the hospital refectory, but I would have to talk. So, West-Endward ho; he dry-washed his

hands, then massaged his face with them, stirring up his color, and told the still-trembling Sickert to hold himself in readiness. Netley would hunt, then report to Gull. Then Gull would have Netley pick Sickert up for the next "operation."

Sickert saw: it was an operation on the body politic, nothing more and nothing less. The women were not women with parts, but they themselves were parts of the body politic, ailing and diseased, ripe for the knife, and he suddenly realized how full the London streets were of blades, so inhospitable to the gentle, even crescendoes of the flesh that cosseted a bony frame and had tensions and lines of force all its own, almost like a canvas. Ghouls were abroad in the night intent on cutting across the natural lines of growth, and here he was assisting, playing the game, afraid not to, lugubriously fascinated by something he might once have dreamed of, or pretended to, for one of his histrionic roles, created to test if his mother would recognize him, but doffable and forgettable like smoke on a March day, not any part of him, not essential, not vital, although here it was being grafted to his very being, never to be stripped away save by some angel of mercy at (he hoped) the wicket-gate to heaven. Out he tumbled, warned to hold himself in readiness, his last vision of the interior being one of Gull wagging an admonishing red finger in the dawnlight with stained muslin gathering burnt umber from the rising sun. Why did the sun rise so early? Or were they late? Cleveland Street was a return to land after being marooned with madmen, but not once did he think of reporting the crime: to whom? You did not report the lungs of the body politic to its toes. Polly Nichols would not see that morning, but at least for a while she would be news, attended to for the first time in her life. Who had she been? What? And with whom? He could hear himself, as he leaned out, the epitome of fashion, saying "Run, run, run," though he doubted if Gull could have caught her. There was only Netley for that, but Netley was vicious; he drove and he fetched and he spotted. He would do anything. Sickert realized that the unspeakable thing holding them together was not in the cab at all, but out there on the high ivory hill of despotism. Without him, Gull would cease

to function: he was a blade; that was all. Without Gull, would Netley go ahead in his own right, like a demented survivor subject to a special echolalia of the criminal classes? Kill at all costs? Well, then, why not simply walk away, or do the job with paralyzing inefficiency? Not merely the threat against him held him in thrall; something else—a mingle of curiosity, timidity, and bravado—kept him in place, or would keep him there for long enough. As he saw it, the other women would vanish once the news was out, or would they? He could envision an awful drama in which the other women would get the final, complete point of Gull's bloody excursions only as they chewed the grapes. If *he* were one of them, he would know what was afoot the instant the news came out of Polly's murder; they could go underground, he supposed, just like that, but not to Spain or Australia. Like the milkman they offered daily service, even to secure a bed for the night. He tried to unknow what he knew, but he could not, nor could he shed the brutal knowledge in that other sense of cleansing himself. He could not go backward, nimbling over the hurdles of effect and cause, effect and cause, until he was at the starting point again, outside his studio in tails and white tie, all spruced up for jollity.

Brenda Hillman

Autumn Moon

. . . the moon comes up in her
secondness, left edge not
filled in quite, the abject not filled in quite
but trying . . .

*

The infinitely 'being called' then
not chosen,
also the fear of being surpassed, cast
off, you know, not needed . . .

*

When first he—no. When you
first stepped from the restaurant, your
bodies anointed with peppermint and sweet
herbs, a sliver of moon snagged on his lip . . .

*

She said
it helps to know
Van Gogh with his
obsession for yellow—

*

He tried the windows and he tried—
nope.
He tried the windows *then*
he tried the doors.

*

haiku in translation it would be like this

autumn moon colon
 some wine stains on white linen
 his separate past

*

. . . and the sense
 of those dear, fugitive hours, all
 erased, erasable!
 Still . . .

*

Through the tic-tac-toe of the steel
 window grid, the start
 of one gold O
 then the game is given up—

*

Some heavy, hopeful
 woolen clouds over it—
 no use.
 The democratic party . . .

*

—and kept working hard on this
 instead of the one about
 the father, who was, of course,
 ‘the sun’

*

—and saw some swirling
 mist over it: notes from
 ex-wives over the years, their gracious
 almost stupid handwriting—

*

female creativity, avoiding
 the issue of talking
 about the father who was
 of course ‘the sun’

*

Halloween: with your tiny one
you stand on the curbside,
beam the flashlight up to its
tin cathedrals—

*

the desire to be
 understood though being
 understood was not
what you meant . . .

*

Raindrops off the eaves
make the cage
for the waning moon,
the satisfied one . . .

*

A rich word
used casually in conversation
(inveigled) swells
as you use it through the days

*

At night in the bathroom
you opened the window to reveal
the subject before its agony, before
 it would be represented . . .

*

When it really is very
crescent, *Die*
Valkerie, the memory
of large, bruised women—

*

calcium
bufferin
halcyon
aspirin

*

Sometimes over Tomales Bay at its half
the blue has leaked in through the lace
edge so it really looks unfinished
like a feminine—what?—something

*

—so why *every*
month the white expansion,
that tyrant
drop of estrogen?

*

. . . and how could you not have reflected him?
When you were called into the lubianka of the soul,
the question chamber you yourself contained,
it was always he who was there . . .

*

Passing Kehoe Beach
spotted moon with moth-
spotted hawk
under her

*

then in your dark
corner of heaven, to learn
the beauty of your life,
you had to leave something out . . .

*

Woman poet—hateful term!
 Sometimes you despised
 the moon with her
 hymn of granite—

*

three quarters gone
 in the blue sky: his Levi's
 button
 just unbuttoned

*

Send it back!
 Send back what was on the right,
 the shadow of the feminine, the pastel.
 She wasn't nice now, was she.

*

—order within an incompleteness, the cut
 tip of a scallion;
 women poets don't have world views,
 said the male poet—

*

. . . but only when you'd ceased
 to be astonished
 could you watch yourself

*

hard isn't it. Almost full again.
 If you press gently
 at the edges, at
 the dark spots in the poem, it may
 spring open—

David Mamet

Two Men

A red hand on the horse's flanks
One hundred-and-some years ago
In these same precincts
In a yellow shirt
Dog warriors bet on
The absence of a Gatling gun.
Some called on God and some
On Colt's Repeating Pistol
Patented Eighteen Seventy-Three.
We know who killed him and why.
But a spy said to me
"You would have made
A good Marine."
While we sat in my kitchen drinking.
And he told me
Who killed Kennedy.

13

of the young
Specifically colored
The ~~changed~~ lawns are spaced with flowering shrubs and
~~public gifts of~~ *their houses all* spring bulbs. ~~All the young~~ have burglar alarms.

Everyone keeps dogs, and it is by the breeds they
choose that you know them and their politics. The cream-and-green
conservatives expel onto front porches fat, aging spaniels and
little barking terriers in defiance of the leash law that did not
exist when they were young. *Mrs. Webster's dog is an insane mongrel, sixteen years old.*

In the liberal houses there are
large poodles, golden retrievers, Dalmatians, and bird dogs. In
three of the houses there are more ominous German shepherds and
Dobermans that their owners also refuse to put on leashes, as if
they needed animal power to control the streets. One man,
Tripp, Jr. Mr. ~~Lee~~ has both. He patrols with them in early afternoon as if
he expected an invasion of Chatham Street. He hollers, "Hyuh,
Beau," and "Hyuh, Stu," in the voice of the upwardly mobile South.

Mrs. Webster pretends he doesn't exist. So does her dog, which is the only one

There is one house on Dunmore Street where there are
no dogs -- but the house is alive with them, day in, day out.

Mrs. MacArthur lives there. She is seventy years old. *B*

~~anyone ever knew her first name it has long been forgotten. Her~~

~~even older aunt lives with her, and a twenty year old unemployed~~

~~grandson who~~ *he* is building a boat in the driveway in which he

plans to sail across the Atlantic *some day*. At night the arc

welder he uses lights the trees with a weird white glare.

~~They live the lives that old Southern families are~~

~~supposed to live, but seldom do.~~ *but* They are from New Jersey and *came*

~~have only been in the neighborhood since the woman's husband, a~~ *to when*

~~rear admiral, was posted to the Naval Base twenty five years ago~~

~~and promptly died, leaving them marooned among strangers.~~ *He*

~~They~~ *Corrected on machine*

A manuscript page from "Dogs," a short story by Mary Lee Settle.



The Art of Fiction CXVI

Mary Lee Settle

Mary Lee Settle is best known for her five volume series of novels called The Beulah Quintet. It is a monumental work that took twenty-eight years to research and write, and it traces the evolution of the people we have become, from seventeenth-century England to contemporary West Virginia. The five books are Prisons, O Beulah Land, Know Nothing, The Scapegoat, and The Killing Ground.

Settle won the National Book Award in 1978 for Blood Tie, a novel set in Turkey, and the Kafka Prize for Fiction for The Killing Ground. All the Brave Promises, a memoir of her ser-

vice in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force of the RAF during World War II, has been called "one of the most moving accounts of war experience ever encountered." Her other novels are The Love Eaters, The Kiss of Kin, The Clam Shell, Celebration, and her latest, Charley Bland, was published last fall by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

She was born in Charleston, West Virginia, spent her early childhood in Pineville, Kentucky, her adolescence in West Virginia, her short education in two years at Sweet Briar College, and her adulthood everywhere—London, Paris, Rome, and Turkey. She now lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

In 1978 she married William Tazewell. He is a retired newspaper editor who writes a weekly book column, and teaches writing at the University of Virginia. Her son, Christopher Weathersbee, lives in Texas.

This interview was begun in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where she was reading at Oklahoma State University. It was carried on by telephone between San Jose, California and Charlottesville, and it was completed in Charlottesville.

Settle lives in a house with a series of pointed roofs that looks like a camp castle. There are two Dalmations. Her workroom, where most of the interview took place, is an aerie that looks out into treetops. The first impression is one of brightness. The colors are primary; the sun pours in. The walls contain objects from a life of wandering that is reflected in her books—fossils called "flowers of darkness" from coal mines, a stone fragment from the Great Rift in Africa, a large photograph of a temple dragon from Kyoto, and, like Merlin's cell in The Once and Future King, the eleventh edition of the The Encyclopedia Britannica. One wall is covered with a much-marked map of Turkey. She is working on a book called Turkish Reflections: a Biography of a Place.

After the National Book Award became the American Book Award in 1981, she started the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, to be judged the same way that the National Book Award had been: by a writer's peers, and by leading critics. It will have its tenth anniversary this year at the Folger Library in Washington, D.C. It still retains its original imperative, that,

in her own words, it be, "an honor in an atmosphere of honor and celebration."

INTERVIEWER

You are best known for *The Beulah Quintet*, which ends in Charleston, West Virginia. You call it Canona. What was Charleston's impact on you as a child, and what caused you to write about it so frequently?

MARY LEE SETTLE

I was not a child in Charleston. I was an adolescent there. I have never understood why it, of all the landscapes I have written about, is considered the font of my work. Conrad said that there is not a place of splendor nor a dark corner of the earth that does not deserve if only a passing glance of wonder and pity. Like Conrad, I chose exile for a long time, and so it was normal for me to find my places in four continents. I have written about England, Turkey, Africa, and Hong Kong. It is where, for me, the ordinary becomes luminous that I find myself, always surprised, placing a story there.

Kentucky and Florida, where I lived as a child, appear all the time in their disguises. *The Beulah Quintet* ends in West Virginia, but the landscape of Canona, and certainly its architecture, comes from several Allegheny cities.

It is typical of towns in the Presbyterian belt of the Alleghenies, where there are pockets of what Mencken called booboisie money and snobbery, mixed with elements of places where coal has been, in the past, the black diamond. That, too, reflects time—the time of the coal barons and their coal baron gothic architecture, the time of the first settlement, the time of modern loss and depression—all in the same mythic place that I hope reflects, beyond itself and its locality, a human condition and a shared past. The world of the coal fields is a feudal world, and I saw Canona as its reflection. And I tell you, it is more real to me than Charleston ever was.

Canona is more than Charleston, and, as always in fiction, less. Somerset Maugham said that it took at least six human beings to make one fictional character. That is true of land-

scape as well, I think. We have to make our landscapes, change streets, create new turnings, rebuild or tear down, change time, and even nature, if need be.

INTERVIEWER

But there has to be a personal impact, and you are talking in fictional terms.

SETTLE

I think in fictional terms—memory transmuted by observation and experience. I lived in Charleston for my most sensitive and memorable years, from the time I was ten until I was eighteen, and very little after that. Someone once described the place to me years later as being surrounded by psychic mountains ten thousand feet high. The instinct for anyone of ambition and intelligence, if they are not held there by love—and I wasn't—is to run for your life. I did. I ran to what Lily in *The Scapegoat* dreamed of when she got on the train in 1912—heaven or New York City—whichever the train got to first. I ran to England and war. Then I ran to dedicated poverty for years after the war, in England, and sometimes to Paris—wherever there were two or three American intellectual refugees gathered together. We all think we escape and then spend the rest of our lives writing about our prisons. I saw those prisons in time always, and the fact that the ending of *The Beulah Quintet* is in Canona is only a small part of the landscape. It starts in England, goes to the Endless Mountains, then begins to concentrate on that country from Charlottesville in the Piedmont of Virginia, to the fictional valley I call the valley of Beulah.

INTERVIEWER

Many people assume that the Beulah Quintet was written in chronological order from *Prisons* to *The Killing Ground*. I know it wasn't. Can you talk about the composition of the quintet? I know that at one point it was a trilogy.

SETTLE

I thought at first that I was going to write a modern novel. I never can start a book until I get both a mind's eye vision and the questions that go with it, like the question Faulkner asked himself about why Caddy's knickers were dirty. My vision was of two men in a drunk tank on a Saturday night; one of them hit the other, a stranger. That was all I knew, and then I began the dangerous process of a half-conscious questioning. It is not an intellectual process at all. What was behind the fist, what anger, what prejudice, why was one man chosen instead of another, what was the residual fury all the way to the genes? I kept on going back until I stopped first at Hannah Bridewell, an eighteenth century convict lost in the Allegheny Mountains in 1755. Then I came forward to write the pre-Civil War volume, called *Know Nothing*. I made the mistake after *Know Nothing* of trying to come up to the modern world too quickly.

INTERVIEWER

That was *Fight Night on a Sweet Saturday*. You don't even claim it on your list of books any more.

SETTLE

It was my *Stephen Hero*, my *Jean Santeuil*. One was the first draft of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the other the first attempt at *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Both were fumbles. So was mine. I began what was essentially a modern novel with a section about the mine wars in 1907, which was cut. My editor at Viking said nobody was interested in coal mines. I let them cut the section and bring out a truncated book, and I have deeply regretted it ever since, although I shouldn't because it forecast years of writing afterwards. I went through the worst reviews I have ever had, and I thought then that years of work were lost, that the Beulah books were a failure. Then I realized that they simply weren't finished yet. What is the saying about the fortunate fall? "Oh happy sin,

oh happy fault." Well, without the short section that had been lost, it was so obviously incomplete that after I had written *All the Brave Promises* and *The Clam Shell*, I went back to it. The mistake made me turn the trilogy into the quintet that exists now, at last. I had seen, years before, a Senate investigation into an incident in the mine wars in West Virginia. It was all verbatim—a gold mine of language and attitudes. I used a true incident from it about a massacre by the Baldwin Felts detective agency, during an early strike called by the United Mine Workers. So *The Scapegoat* was set, as the seed incident was, in 1912. I added *Prisons* at the beginning, which was about a true incident in the mid-seventeenth century English Civil War that led to the dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell. It was in studying that incident, a revolt of Cromwellian cavalry who refused to fight in Ireland, that I found some of the sources of our language of democracy. *Prisons* gave me language, and *The Scapegoat* gave me a whole new understanding of the parents and their effect on their children in the new last volume, *The Killing Ground*. There is a poignancy, for instance, in knowing that the fairly stern father in *The Killing Ground* is poor Mooney from *The Scapegoat*, or that Alhea, the sexy, alcoholic sister, is the survivor and the Ancient Mariner of the last book. It gives a depth and an echo to the last volume that *Fight Night on a Sweet Saturday* couldn't have. After *The Killing Ground*, I knew it was finished. It had taken, altogether, twenty-eight years.

INTERVIEWER

I have tried to define the genre of the quintet, and I have come up with "psychological/historical novels" as a definition. How would you describe the genre?

SETTLE

Oh lord. Psychological/historical. A label! Why not say an attempt to see the society as a character in its own time? What I tried to do was to become contemporary with the time so that I was empathetic with what people thought was happening,

and who they thought they were, rather than using the knowledge that we have as hindsight. This, in a way, is a definition of our time—now we live in a world in which we think we know what is going on, but we can't see the overall picture until we see where we came from to this moment. So if you read the quintet chronologically, you know, as a reader, more of the past of the people in-it than they do. You can see its effect on them when they can't. You also, by the definition of the time in which you are reading, know more of their future.

INTERVIEWER

In the last volume, *The Killing Ground*, which is contemporary, how does this work? How would you relate the understanding of your fictional people in, say, 1960, to our understanding now, twenty years later, of the 1960s?

SETTLE

Remember when Hannah goes up Lacey Creek with the Kennedys in the West Virginia primary in 1960? I am, and you, the readers, are aware that she is looking at the back of John Kennedy's head, but Hannah, at that point, is not really conscious of it. There is a resonance for you and me that she can't possibly know.

INTERVIEWER

You mean Oswald looking at the back of John Kennedy's head. Is that what you are getting at?

SETTLE

Yes.

INTERVIEWER

That's a good example.

SETTLE

I think so. The same kind of thing works throughout the quintet, I hope. All through that 1960 episode, Hannah is as ignorant as a stone. She spends the years between 1960 and

1980 searching for the past and writing about it. Her books are the same as mine—*Prisons*, *O Beulah Land*, *Know Nothing*, *The Scapegoat*. That, by the way, is the only autobiographical thing about her. She is younger than I am; she was born in 1933. She's an Eisenhower brat. I grew up when Franklin D. Roosevelt was the only president we seemed to have ever had.

INTERVIEWER

I think it was Kenneth Burke who called whatever compulsion it is to get something off one's chest, "the writer's burden." What do you think of as being the first burden that you had to get off your chest and into print?

SETTLE

To recognize that is to recognize that we write the same book over and over. The first obsession is the last for me, and I have just finished what I hope is the final and deepest dive into it, what I hope to God is the last novel to take place in Beulah Land. It is called *Charley Bland* and it is the most profound study of the obsession yet.

Part of it is the inherent quest for freedom, which has become genetic with Americans. Look at the way we move to greener pastures all the time, find them much the same, and blame anything but ourselves. Then, too, and close to it, is the place of men of diffuse talents and good will, and what is asked of them by the world they live in. Death was asked of Johnny Church in the first volume, *Prisons*; too little was asked of Johnny McKarkle in *The Killing Ground* at the end. Heroism was taken for granted in Turkey, where *Blood Tie* was placed, and where Munji lived. It was what he expected of himself. The decision to live with his past, which may be the most difficult demand of all for a Puritan, was demanded of Ewen in *Celebration*. There is a self-questioning in such men, sometimes a self-defeat. Am I needed? Have I a place where I can be used well? What does society ask of me that I can give? When it asks nothing, or too little, men die on the vine. Once they farmed and explored and led other men into a wilderness.

In the modern world, they take up dangerous sports, do funny things, marry too often, drive too fast, take to drink, exploit women in a kind of sexual revenge . . . know, maybe without knowing, that their fatal flaw is to acquiesce to small decencies, and find those glimpses they allow of themselves almost unbearable. It makes them dangerously good at war. But I have learned, in all this exploration of the kind of men I am drawn to, as Hardy was drawn to those great independent women in his Wessex, that they choose their own defeat, and it has been hard for me to face.

INTERVIEWER

The woods and the city are full of them, but would you say they are still in a minority compared to those who wish not to be used well? Who wish just to be let alone?

SETTLE

Oh, you mean the hollow men? There is no wish with them. They work for insurance companies, vote Republican, belong to country clubs, question nothing, and die. Turgenev called them the rich, the happy, and the unjust. The unused and the unjust look the same, all too often. I'm writing about a few of them who are capable of having broken hearts. They are not cynics. I am so tired of cynicism. It seems to me to be a disease of the young, the exhausted, and the lazy-minded.

INTERVIEWER

I want to turn to the matter that most young writers want to hear about from an established writer, and that is how you got published the first time. There is that tremendous first barrier where you supposedly need an agent to get published but you can't get an agent unless you are published.

SETTLE

It's a cloud barrier. I never had a single book sold by an agent, although I have had them negotiate the contracts often. That's what they are for. They are *not* critics, and they are not editors, and their opinions shouldn't be taken too seriously.

Remember, they are out to make money, and they want young writers to imitate what has already been successful. Years ago, I had editorial advice from an agent—supposedly one of the best in London; he said that no “heroine” should be more than eighteen years old, that she should be a virgin, and that there should never be more than one fact to a page. I’m sure there are still versions, maybe more subtle, given by agents to young writers now.

INTERVIEWER

Then how did you get started?

SETTLE

I should tell you right now that the first fiction I ever saw in print was in *The Paris Review*. I had to keep quiet about what a crossing of the Rubicon it was because everybody else seemed so sophisticated about publishing. I had to do my shouting to the housetops behind doors and late at night and alone!

I also had my first experience of being edited then. Peter Matthiessen wrote me a long letter about style. I only remember one piece of professional advice—that I should not use the word “shit” and the word “sumac” in the same paragraph, and I never have since.

My first book, *The Kiss of Kin*, was sent by an agent to literally every major publisher in New York and London, and refused by all of them. While that was going on, I wrote a second novel, *The Love Eaters*. While that, too, was being refused all over the place, I began the research and the first draft of *O Beulah Land*. Then a woman I knew in London who was a literary scout took *The Love Eaters* to Heinemann, in London, and they bought it. Finally, after ten years of waiting, and after I had already begun what was to become *The Beulah Quintet*, I had a book accepted.

INTERVIEWER

Do you recall what it was like?

SETTLE

Its publication was a Walter Mitty dream. I had hidden out in a hotel in Paris called the Helvetia, because I was so nervous about the book coming out. I took one book with me, *Life on the Mississippi*, and read it over and over. I left on the Sunday morning after the publication date, to face what I thought would be total failure—or worse, silence. Max Steele was a kind of hero to me then, and in many ways still is. He had won the Harper Prize for a wonderful novel called *Debby*. Just as the train pulled out of Gare St. Lazare, he came running down the platform with the London papers in one hand and a jar of watermelon pickles his mother in North Carolina had sent him in the other. He thrust them in the window and the train pulled out. The reviews were wonderful. Later I had the great satisfaction of holding five cables in my hand from publishers in New York who had refused the book; I chose Harper's, mostly because Max told me to. Harper's and Heinemann took *The Kiss of Kin* as a second novel. Several reviewers said that for once a writer's second novel is as good as the first.

INTERVIEWER

How tough were those ten years? Could you content yourself with writing and not being accepted into print or did you get tremendously discouraged and think about chucking it?

SETTLE

There was no question of that. It was not, with me, a caprice to choose or lay aside. Anyone who has a choice and doesn't choose *not* to write is a fool. Don't people know that it's the hardest work in the world? Joseph Conrad said that he had loaded hundredweights of coal all day long on a ship in Amsterdam in the wintertime, and that it was nothing to the energy demanded for a day's work writing. The work is hard, the perks are few, the pay is terrible, and the product, when it's finally finished, is pure joy. If you set out to write for money and fame, as Freud said writers did, then you should sell junk bonds or shoot somebody instead. It's easier.

INTERVIEWER

How did you survive?

SETTLE

First, I made a precarious living as a free-lance journalist, so I worked in a professional world, in the meat and potatoes reality of writing and publishing; I was not protected, as young writers are now by the academic world, so there were no surprises. I never dreamed of chucking it. I had far too much of what every young writer needs—a kind of protective arrogance. And I was surrounded by people in London and Paris who hadn't been published yet—where “yet” was the operative word—and we all clutched to ourselves the fine sustaining illusion that we were better writers than most of the living and some of the dead. As for money, I think that for serious writers, it's a matter of luck. Some have that luck, Some don't. There is a danger in trying too hard to control it. It simply lands on people. Peter Ustinov once suggested a parlor game in London. Everyone was supposed to tell what they would do if they had a hundred thousand pounds. When it was J. B. Priestley's turn, he slowly drew on his pipe, thinking. Then he said, in his Yorkshire accent. “Ah 'ave 'undred thasand pounds.”

INTERVIEWER

You lived in England for a long time. In the forties and fifties, you had the company of your peers as you worked. Was it any different from what young writers face in this country now?

SETTLE

Not much, really, except that we didn't have the sometimes false hope of large rewards. We clung together as young writers tend to do, to hold each other up. We needed mutual criticism and we passed books back and forth. Here is a sad difference. We read a lot. I don't know of a single young writer I started out with in London who hadn't read every classic novel; and I mean *every one*. We talked about *Daniel Deronda* as we

talked about the latest book that had come out and been celebrated. This seems to me to be a much healthier atmosphere to write in. I'm talking about people who left school at fifteen, like, by the way, William Faulkner and Katherine Anne Porter. They never faced the academic deadening of writing.

INTERVIEWER

And yet for so many writers, that's their essential means of support these days—the academy.

SETTLE

Yes, and they are damned lucky. I wish they would stop complaining. I've compared it to the essential means of support offered in the early fifties. I seemed then to have two choices—either to have the silver spoon stuffed down my throat so that it choked me, or to escape and live at survival level. Then, I could have been an editor any place. I had been trained in the Office of War Information by some of the best editors in the country. I could have gone to Hollywood; I could have done all of that in the fifties, but I didn't. I've wondered what would have happened if I had been offered the lesser safety of the academy then, instead of after publishing five novels.

INTERVIEWER

Were most of the group you knew then finally published?

SETTLE

No, some died, some quit. It wasn't talent that defeated some of them. It was something else. Talent was two-a-penny. Everybody seemed to have it. And there was despair, of a kind. I remember Eduardo Paolozzi, the sculptor, sitting in the *prix fixe* in the rue Jacob in Paris, turning a slice of tomato over and over, and saying, "Next stop, the river!" Years later, Eduardo and I were having dinner at Wilton's, one of the grandest restaurants in London, and we were eating the same thing, tomato salad, poached fish and white wine, only this time it

was not because we were broke, but because we were watching our weight. After dinner, we took a long walk through London and we talked about why some had fallen by the wayside, when we hadn't. We decided that it was two things. We never lost our arrogance, and we had an even greater sustaining energy—obsession—that self-demand that makes you stick to it. It's what kept me going for the twenty-eight fairly obscure years that it took to finish *The Beulah Quintet*.

INTERVIEWER

To what extent have you felt that you've had to yield at least something to the demands of agents or editors? When you turn a manuscript over would you say your mind is closed toward editorial suggestions?

SETTLE

Good God, no! That's amateur. I've had some fine editors. You know in aerial navigation there is a point where lines intersect, called a fix. One of my real tests about whether something needs work is to take a fix on what several readers tell me. If they cross at a single point I know it has to be worked on. Then, too, if I'm tentative about something, and my editor spots it and points it out, I'm grateful. I know that it was right to be tentative. Sometimes an editor can point out a whole concept you haven't thought of. The best editing advice I ever had was from Bob Giroux, who simply, without a note in his hands—I'll paraphrase—said, "This is what is wrong with this book. The narrative chronology you have used makes parts of it seem weak. If they were put before the dramatic climax, they would be lyric as you mean them to be." The idea of a dramatic chronology was a revelation to me. I learn slowly. That kind of editing I thank God for—a good editor may spot when something is missing; a bad editor tries to tell you what to put there. Long ago, just after the Second World War, an editor tried to tell me in a letter just how to finish my first attempt at writing a novel. I had made the mistake of showing him half a book—a mistake that, by the way, I have never made since. I left the manuscript in a taxi.

INTERVIEWER

What?

SETTLE

It had been picked over too much. First it was a short story. Cyril Connelly told me to turn it into a novel. I hadn't yet experienced the sad fact that these decisions must come from within. So I tried, with little idea of what I was doing. Then the advice came about how to finish it. I realized that the book had died of too much editorial attention when it was in too early a stage for that. So I abandoned the corpse. That's all. It was unimportant.

INTERVIEWER

Who is the editor that you most wish you had?

SETTLE

The editor I wished I had was Robert Giroux, and now I have him. Another fine editor that I have had is Rob Cowley. I can tell you a third — Roger Shattuck. When he read the first draft of *The Killing Ground*, he said, "Mary Lee, what you need is a big scene, like the agricultural fair in *Madame Bovary*." I said, "A production number?" He was right. He was responsible for my writing the whole country club scene at the beginning that reviews all of the quintet that has gone before.

INTERVIEWER

Then comes the next group after the book sees print: the reviewers, the literary critics. Do you put much weight on what any of them say?

SETTLE

I once said that a good review stops me working for three days, a bad review stops me for four days. All you have to remember is that the pup is going to piss on the newspaper, and that everybody except yourself is going to forget them. I see literary criticism as a different thing. More time is taken when it is good, and it should be honored. But they are all

talking about something that is already done. I am not conscious of taking anything with me when I begin again, certainly not what has been said, hardly what has been learned. There is only one thing I take to a new first draft that is a comfort: I have finished before and it gives me confidence that I can finish again.

INTERVIEWER

I want to talk about the writing process itself. What is essential; what are good habits, bad habits?

SETTLE

A long time ago in one of these *Paris Review* interviews, Ernest Hemingway said you need a built-in fool-proof shit detector. He was right, but the shit detector is no good unless you have the energy to use it and the obsession to let nothing stop you. If you lose energy it shows in the work, and if you lose obsession you become a cynical imitator of your past work. Energy, obsession, and a good sustaining arrogance are what is needed, I think.

INTERVIEWER

How do you keep them? Aren't they both burdens and gifts?

SETTLE

Yes, they are, but they can at least be protected. A too early quest for fame can suck away so much energy that a body of work can't be sustained, as many writers have found to their sorrow. Fashionable, lousy habits can do it, too. When I was first starting, it was fashionable to be a drunk. If you were drunk all the time, you must have talent. Then there was attempted suicide, which often, I think by mistake, worked. I mention no names, but someone was recommended to me in London with these words: "She's terribly talented. She's tried to commit suicide three times!" I was fortunate. I had a child to raise, and so I had to get on with a less fashionable, more mundane life. The result has been a body of work that I am

justly proud of. It has cost a lot, but at least I have been able to sustain it.

INTERVIEWER

I want to talk about the writing process, that is, you as a writer at work. What is the most productive time of day for you?

SETTLE

Morning; by the time I am deep into a book, it is very early. I once worked late in the afternoon and then I realized that I was missing most of the human race, so I kept setting my work time back until now it is a joke—the sun and I get up at the same time. I go straight upstairs to my workroom; if I don't, if I stop at all, I'm lost. There are all those vastly important things to do, like the laundry! So I go there, and I meditate, and I wait. Waiting for the voices is for me the most important part.

INTERVIEWER

Tell me about waiting for the voices.

SETTLE

How can I tell about silence? I think that that period of being able to wait until the sound and vision of a book forms unconsciously like a dream, and then is allowed to reach your conscious mind so that you can hear it, see it, and tell about it, is the single moment that separates the fiction writer from all the others who depend on craft, real memory and intelligence. It is not an act of intelligence. Those writers are of great value to me, but only after the initial process. I learn my craft from them, but for myself, I have to wait that time out. It is, when it comes, quite simply, the almost total recall of something that did not happen—at least not that way. I have used helps—like drawing my way into a scene or a person, but none of it really works. Only the waiting, and then they come, the people to be told about and they demand this as strongly as Jacob demanded of the angel that he be blessed. I think that

the writer is both Jacob and angel. At first there is Jacob's demand of the angel for the voices and visions to come forth, and then the demand of the angel to Jacob that writers use them to tell the truth. Every book has a voice of its own and you can't impose it, you have to learn to recognize it. I'm talking about fiction. I love to write nonfiction—memoirs, travel—and I can do it with people in the room and the telephone ringing. It is technique and memory. Fiction demands that you take the raw material—what you've observed, or are obsessed by, what you've learned, what you've lived, everything—and you transmute it at some very, very unconscious level. It's alchemy. You are translating it all into something that isn't any of it. It's what I wait for. It has to transcend its raw material, its matrix, and become itself—totally other—and that takes an untold amount of energy that I don't know I've used until it's over. I'm a quarter horse. When I'm finally going I write about a thousand words in an hour. Then I'm totally wiped out, and I garden or fuss around to recover.

INTERVIEWER

What is the maximum number of hours you can write in a day? Fiction, I mean.

SETTLE

Just about that hour until the end, and then I move into a hotel, inn, whatever. Wake up, write, go to sleep, wake up, write, a twenty-four hour schedule. The novel tends to be so powerful by then for me that it takes me with it. I do it so that what energy I have by the end can all go onto the page. I learned long ago, reading Thomas Hardy, that the end of a book can be ruined by letting the writer's fatigue creep into it.

INTERVIEWER

I have read that you won't read any other novels at the time you are writing lest you absorb their voices into your own.

SETTLE

I have too good an ear for language. I'm afraid of picking

up other voices. Look at the quintet. There are five different languages in those books, to say nothing of the hundreds of individual voices. And when I am at that level of concentration and, for lack of a better word, stupidity. Proust described the painter Elstir as having the genius to make himself stupid before the canvas. It's an ideal to try for. Maybe that is what I meant by waiting in silence.

INTERVIEWER

Do you resent the revision process once the book has generated its first draft and the major part of your imagining is done? Do you resent having to go back and tinker with it?

SETTLE

No! I *love* it. When it's out there, apart from me, a thing even roughly formed, I can use my intelligence. I can ask it questions. Is this true? Is this what I mean? Is there too much weight? Too much nervous explanation? Does it balance? And that wonderful slang question — does it fly? For me that means the lightness and connection I seek, all the delicacy and the charm — as in the quality between quarks. Then everything that I've learned, that doesn't consciously help me in the first draft, works for me — it's craft, and it's wonderful. I can do that for hours at a time.

INTERVIEWER

Most American writers write in an essentially American form, the short story. Why don't you?

SETTLE

I'm not good at them. I've won a couple of short-story prizes, but that was an accident. The form doesn't come to me easily at all. You don't chose the form you write in; it's chosen by the content, and until the form comes, the content remains amorphous. I guess I'm used to receiving work on a larger canvas. Except that I still write poetry once in a while. Things come in that form, like brandy, a distillation. Alas, for me it isn't very good brandy. I don't publish it.

INTERVIEWER

You won the National Book Award in 1978, and at that point you had been a published writer for two dozen years. Why do you think full appreciation of your work was so slow?

SETTLE

Much of that obscurity was sought. I had an instinct for its protection until I had finished the huge task I had stumbled into. I had long since seen how much time and energy celebrity takes. In this country it is so often mistaken for fame. Fame is earned, but much celebrity is sought, and some, alas, is stumbled on innocently. I think it has destroyed some fine writers—among them Mac Hyman, who was broken by publishers who demanded that he write *No Time for Sergeants* over again. So his later, and often better, work remained unpublished. The world of celebrity is hermetic. It is also too socially protected from the real world to be good for writers. I saw this when I was very young in London. I was in a situation, working at the OWI in London at the end of the war, where I was surrounded by people who were celebrated; I realized then that those people were somehow cut off from life. The famous only knew the famous, and when you went to a famous house somebody famous always walked in. My instinct, because these decisions are never really conscious, was to avoid this. I did for a long time. I kept disappearing, by necessity. I knew that I would never get the vast amount of work in which I had been caught finished if I tried to live in what Yeats called “the public bog.”

It isn't that I have been neglected in this country. I haven't. For many years I have had a very solid and sustaining reputation among writers I respect. I have not had what I call “drug-store paperback” fame that demands of the celebrated that they write the same celebrated book over and over again.

Now I realize that I have gone from obscurity to being a monument without an intervening period of airport and supermarket fame. I would, of course, have enjoyed the money. I don't think this is the fault of readers, but of those in the frightened and timid publishing industry who think they

know what “people” want—the same people that they tend to despise. After all, intelligent people eat and fly. About a year ago, I had to go into a bookstore because I had forgotten a book I was planning to read from. I looked in “Fiction” and it wasn’t there. When I asked the saleswoman she said, “Oh, you’re in ‘Literature.’” I said, “Why? I’m not dead!”

INTERVIEWER

What was the effect of the National Book Award on your career?

SETTLE

It made me sick. It also made my advances seven times what they had ever been before. It should have been wonderful, after all the necessary years of obscurity while I was working on *The Beulah Quintet*, but it was one of the most unpleasant experiences I have ever had. The envy, the viciousness were appalling. I have always tried to protect myself from that second-rate literary posse that forms in New York when anything generous shows its head. My husband said afterwards that he would rather be invited to a train-wreck than a New York literary cocktail party.

INTERVIEWER

But most writers consider it a great honor.

SETTLE

It certainly is—or should be. I was very happy about being chosen. I thought my years of work had been recognized at last, and I was profoundly grateful for that. I went to New York quite joyfully. I had no idea that I would be, what—I think it was Samuel Butler—called, a lion in a den of Daniels. So much criticism was heaped on the choice that it became a negative, embarrassing media game. I was referred to as “Mary Lee Who?” by that woofle-haired man who is on television in the mornings. Digby Diehl wrote an article in, I think, the *Village Voice*, defending the choice, and pointing out that only two people in the Critic’s Circle, who were raising such

hell, had even read the book. They had had five weeks to do so after the nominations were announced. It all soured what should have been one of the happiest moments of my writing life. That is why one of the ground rules of the PEN/Faulkner Award is that it be an honor given in an atmosphere of honor and celebration.

INTERVIEWER

You live in a university town. Are you drawn to this world?

SETTLE

Wait. Charlottesville is more than a university town; it is the county seat of what someone described as the only county they knew of that was zoned for two-thousand acres. There is a balance between town, gown and county there that you find in few other places. It's been my home for three times in my life, and only once have I been connected with the University.

The university circuit sounds like a vaudeville tour. If I ever said I was drawn to the academic world I lied. I loathe the atmosphere of "school" and have loathed it all my life, but I love the idea of rescuing students from the atmosphere and telling them where, in Thoreau's words, the arsenal is, instead of the damned theory they seem to be filled with. I want to whisper to them, don't forget that the metaphor for primal energy is a whale, a whale, a whale. I want people to know that there are books and there are voices and they can find them. As for going to places to read, I don't do it often. I go where my friends are, and I have a lot who teach. It's good to see them.

INTERVIEWER

You live near and associate with a number of other contemporary writers. First of all, would you say who they are and what special energy or companionship or whatever you want to call it, you derive from the association with other writers?

SETTLE

Now, I am in the most ideal situation I have been in since we all sustained each other in the early days, when we were

“down and out in Paris and London.” I have a community of old friends around me, and I hope I help them as much as they help me. I’ve known Ann Beattie since 1976, and I love what she does. Her voice is one that I recognize: its lightness, its humor, its almost Mozartian twilight. She swears that we met at the University of Iowa, in a bar, and I said, “I’m sorry I can’t come to your reading, but tonight is my belly-dancing class.” I’ve known George Garret since 1963. I’ve admired him as I do few other writers, and been fond of him. Roger Shattuck I’ve known for many years. Alas, he is no longer there. John Casey is in Charlottesville, and so is Douglas Day and Gregory Orr. It was a reading of Greg’s that provided me with the first spark of a new novel that I am planning to begin in the fall, and a poem of George Garrett’s that has already given me the title. I have it written in large red letters on my workroom wall, waiting for me to finish writing about Turkey. It will be called *Cage of Bone*. We all exchange work. I see Charles Wright, and I admire him so much as a poet — there’s a special reason; he is from the same mountain world that I am from. So are Peter Taylor, and Eleanor Taylor. I understand what they are doing. Fortunately for me, all of these writers are ones that I admire. It’s gratifying. We don’t see each other all the time, but there’s a sense of community in knowing they are here, without the darkness of envious competition. Of course my best writer-friend is my husband; he is a nonfiction writer and critic, and a fine linear editor with an Uzi eye.

INTERVIEWER

These are people that you wouldn’t find in the back-biting line at the old National Book Awards?

SETTLE

Not one of them. I wish they had been there.

INTERVIEWER

Can you talk about influences on your writing? Certain of your books are built around classical myths.

SETTLE

Only one, and that was a dare. I wrote *The Love Eaters* on a bet with James Broughton. We were walking through the ruins of the Crystal Palace Gardens in London having a three-bottle argument on the nature of tragedy. I said it had to be recognized and he said it was inherent. I said, "James, if the Phaedra were placed in a modern small town nobody would recognize it. They would say she was menopausal or mutton dressed as lamb." He said, "Prove it." So I tried to. Not one critic realized that *The Love Eaters* was the story of the Phaedra.

INTERVIEWER

What about the Antigone legend in *The Beulah Quintet*?

SETTLE

I ran across so many references to Antigone as a much-quoted play in the time of the Cromwellian dictatorship in the seventeenth century. It had been translated into Latin, which most educated men could read, by the lyric poet, Thomas Watson. I realized that the Creon/Antigone legend was being fought out there, and still is, wherever there are two political sides. Democracy seems to me to be the balance between them. Creon needs Antigone; Antigone needs Creon—a perpetual attempt at authority, a perpetual turning of the wrist. A democratic metaphor.

INTERVIEWER

Let me try something out on you. I know you admit to Joseph Conrad as an influence. In *The Scapegoat* I thought I saw *Nostromo*.

SETTLE

I'm fascinated that you did. I certainly was not conscious of it. My structure for *The Scapegoat* came from thinking of a trial after an accident. One person remembers it one way, another, another way. All those fragmented memories are put together to get the true story of what happened. That's why you have a jury. Who remembers the truth as a whole? Then, as

a counterpoint, my story keeps going back to what was actually happening at the time, juxtaposed with Lily's story of what she remembered, with Althea's, and with Mary Rose's. I see in telling this that if there was a strong literary influence, it was one of my favorite films, *Rashomon*.

INTERVIEWER

What is it then that you personally feel you must learn from Conrad?

SETTLE

Guts, I think. The way nothing stopped him from writing. Anything could have stopped him. My God, he learned the first words of the language he wrote in for the rest of his life from sailors in Lowestoft, England, when he was nineteen. You can imagine what the words were. From that beginning he turned into one of the great modern stylists. But deep, deep in his mind what he had to draw on was a training in English literature. You know, he was exiled with his father, who was a Polish poet and patriot, to Siberia when he was four or five years old. His mother died in Siberia. His father was translating the whole of Shakespeare into Polish, and the child was his only audience. The first time Conrad appeared in public was as a ten-year-old, walking behind his father's coffin, alone, as the chief mourner in a huge patriotic funeral in Cracow.

What most people know is that he ran away to sea at fifteen or sixteen and had some adventures and then settled down to write about them. What people don't know is that a French-speaking Pole managed to go through, and pass, the oral examinations to become an English merchant sea captain. Can you imagine how xenophobic three British captains would be when a little Pole walked in looking so dapper that he was called "The Count"? They kept him longer in that examination than anyone had ever been kept and he walked out a captain. He had become his own dream. I think it is his sheer guts that I admire as much as anything else. His attempt to say what is unsayable and keep on trying until he says it, and his way of writing so that you go beyond the words, as if they were

only a veil to get through, to the vision. Do you remember, in *Typhoon*, when it's still, and the stars ride up the porthole, just *shhoo*, like that, and you realize that the ship is listing. . . ?

INTERVIEWER

You have talked and written about Proust as well as Conrad. Are you conscious of his effect on your work?

SETTLE

Oh yes, and there are others as well, I hope. I have often used guides for work, not to imitate but to warn. For instance, when I was thinking of *All the Brave Promises*, which is a memoir of my experiences in the English women's section of the Royal Air Force during the Second World War, I read Proust. I was dealing with material so harsh in a world so harsh, that if I had written harshly about it, you would never have been able to see it with me. In *The Clamshell*, a story of adolescence, I had to avoid being sentimental about going back to age eighteen. I had to be reminded about the difference, all the time, between lyricism and sentimentality. I read Stendhal, who is romantic but never sentimental. Oh, who else? Hardy to tell me how far things are from each other; Fitzgerald to reassure me that American people can be luminous and tragic, and that I don't, as an American, have to write either for or against. As for Conrad, he is my essential guide for the reasons I talked about before — his pride, his ability to see beyond words, his guts. I can't read them after I have started a first draft, but before that, they have guided me.

INTERVIEWER

No modern writers?

SETTLE

They *are* "modern" writers, all of them — innovative, daring. That you have to see in time as well.

INTERVIEWER

You attend to language a lot. Is language, for you, a part

of a fictional person more than just the vehicle by which they speak?

SETTLE

Of course. We all have individual voices, personal languages. That is true whether I am writing about the past or the present, the Turks or Americans. But books, and the people in them, have their own voices which are not my voice. There are all the individual voices in *Blood Tie*, and in the quintet, voices of the past and the present. In *Celebration* you can hear Noel, loud and clear. I love Pius's voice, slightly ironic and formal at the same time.

INTERVIEWER

Can you talk about Pius? He is certainly a unique character.

SETTLE

Pius busted into that book. What did I know about six-foot-nine Dinkas? Nothing. I knew as little about the Jesuits. I had been reading about Africa because of Ewen going there in *Celebration*. Much of his story was based on the experiences of several friends and of going to Africa myself, but I needed to know more. One of the books was the memoirs of a district officer in the Sudan. He told about a ten-year-old Dinka boy going to school in Wau, walking sixty-five miles with a bag of dried corn to sustain him on the road, totally naked, with his clean uniform neatly folded on his head so that he would be tidy when he got there. That little boy haunted me. He would stop, he explained, in Dinka villages at night. It was he who led me to the Dinkas. Then I found the work of a Dinka, Francis Madding Deng, a lawyer and anthropologist who has taught at Harvard and who is the Sudanese minister to Ottawa. He had written two anthropological studies of the Dinka. There were also two Africans I had known years ago in London. But all this is hindsight. I didn't make any intellectual decision about Pius. In *Celebration*, they were all asleep in the Bedford lorry on the road to Faradje, and suddenly a huge black man turned up.

INTERVIEWER

Moving on to politics; I see a strong political sense in what you say. You left the country when Nixon was elected president. How long did you stay abroad and what statement were you trying to make with that gesture?

SETTLE

I didn't like him, and I was ashamed that he was president.

INTERVIEWER

Were you ashamed of your fellow Americans for electing him?

SETTLE

Let's say I think they were misled. A lot was going on because of the Vietnam War that people didn't know about. In 1968, I was teaching a term at Bard College in Dutchess County, New York, which is a conservative stronghold. Bard is a very liberal school, as you know. We were warned not to go out on the public road at night because people were throwing rocks at us from cars. Several students had been hurt.

I was Sister-Anna-carry-the-banner whenever there was a march in New York against the war. I was a veteran of the Second World War, so I marched with the veterans. That, of course, got me a black dossier. It had been at least dark grey since I began to try to join up in 1941, before we went into the war, and so I was called a premature anti-fascist. There was harassment, my telephone ringing in the middle of the night, cars driving in and out of my driveway when I was alone, a visit by the IRS in an attempt to keep me from leaving the country, all mindless and scary. It was a very bad time—Operation Chaos was going on, completely secret so that if you mentioned it people thought you were being paranoid, so I said to hell with this, I'm getting out of the country. Like the song says, "I ain'ta gonna be treated thisaway."

INTERVIEWER

In *Blood Tie* and again in *Celebration* there is a lot of em-

phasis on expatriation and dislocation. It is clearly something that intrigues you. Why did your characters expatriate, why are they dislocated?

SETTLE

Why do you call it dislocation? It sounds entropic and except for a few of them, it's more positive than that.

INTERVIEWER

I guess I'm asking, what's wrong with home?

SETTLE

Oh, oh! I sense the undercurrent of chauvinism we all have to deal with—even in ourselves. It depends on where home is, and whether you are in a society that will accept you for what you need to be. We Americans exile ourselves by choice, as I did. I went the first time to war, the second time in an instinct to find companionship for what I wanted to do, and then, in 1968, as a political gesture. Then there is another, underlying reason, especially for writers. It's cheaper to live outside the country and do the work you want to do, away from that demand for too high a standard of living that we seem to be caught in like a web. I think that where you go is less important than the act of leaving. Once you pull your feet out of your own primitive turf you might as well be anyplace.

INTERVIEWER

You write a lot of nonfiction. Do you feel that fiction writers are closet essayists yearning to be free to tell the world directly what they have been trying to say indirectly in their fiction?

SETTLE

I can't speak for anyone else. I don't need to yearn to be free to write what I want to. I write it because I enjoy it. It's less demanding. I write travel essays to sing for my supper when I want to go someplace. I write memoirs because they come to me and it's time to remember. The essay on Somerset Maugham and the essay on T. S. Eliot that I have published

are part of a book of memoirs that will follow on from *All The Brave Promises*. There are several levels, I hope, to both of them. In the Maugham piece, I was trying to say something about what it was to be a young writer that I couldn't have said another way. There is true indirection, if you like. In the Eliot piece I was talking as well about London just after the Second World War. Some of the essays will be about places in time—New York in 1939, Paris in the early fifties. I'm writing a second nonfiction book about Turkey, about all the kingdoms, tier on tier. In a way, it's a rest from writing novels, which take a different and more profound level of energy.

INTERVIEWER

Why?

SETTLE

You don't need to make anything up, to conjure. It's as simple as that.

INTERVIEWER

What about the novel called *Charley Bland* that you have just finished? How does it connect with your other work?

SETTLE

It is, I hope, the last unfinished business of Beulah Land. It's a love story, or rather a story about love, which is different. I thought I was finally adult enough to write about love. It's about the most basic triangle there is—the mother-son-woman. I was at dinner in Washington about two years ago, and there was a psychiatrist sitting beside me. He asked me what I was working on, and I said, "the most basic triangle." "Mother-son-woman," he said, "Thank God somebody is working on it, because everybody evades that most essential triangle. Most of my work comes out of it."

INTERVIEWER

What about sex as a part of love? Do you ignore that?

SETTLE

Oh come on! My books are permeated with sexuality. They are bound to be if they are alive. But there is only specific sex when it is true to the person I'm writing about. You know, I think that the obligatory sex acts that publishers want stuck into contemporary novels are as out of place in serious work as that eighteen-year-old virgin the agent demanded in London forty years ago. Times haven't changed. They've flipped. But it's the same old commercial demand. After all, much writing about sex is false. The ecstasy is without words, the physical act is common place, and the athletics slightly ridiculous.

INTERVIEWER

You have created a corpus of work that will not be forgotten. Given that, how would you like best to be remembered by readers, teachers, and critics, who will enjoy your writing, convey it, and probe it for decades to come? I guess writers, when they finally finish their work, get a label or a category.

SETTLE

I'll never be in a category. Categories are a form of critical laziness. The best writers don't fit into any one of them. Try to fit *Typee* and then *Omoo* and then *Mardi* and then *Moby Dick* and then *The Confidence Man* into a category. The category is Herman Melville.

INTERVIEWER

There are those who will reduce them, and you're saying that they should not be reduced. How would you like them seen then?

SETTLE

Ideally, I should like to see *The Beulah Quintet* read all together and chronologically. The other books should be taken separately, I hope. As for exegesis, *explication du texte*, and all that, I agree with Conrad who said that the only valid criti-

cism was either to burst into tears or throw the book across the room. I wish we could be more serious about work and less solemn.

INTERVIEWER

Let me ask you a very personal question. You and your husband are very close. I wonder if that kind of closeness between people is achievable for most at a younger age, or whether you have to learn a lot first.

SETTLE

You certainly have to grow up. Marriage is an adult occupation. Alas, people, and I was one of them, get sex and marriage mixed up with each other, and expect too much of both. In a marriage when you're older you learn the value of its dailiness. For twenty years between marriages I lived alone, except off and on, in passing. That kind of life that is supposed to be so free isn't free at all. It has to be perpetually planned, lest you get too lonely. You have to go seventy-five percent of the way; you can't just relax. All the bourgeois domestic days that young women think they are trapped in are to me a glory; and by the way, they can replace that kind of "sought anonymity" that a writer needs. Flaubert said that behind every passionate work of art there was a bourgeois day.

INTERVIEWER

We have covered a lot of ground. Is there anything that you wish we had covered that we haven't?

SETTLE

Young writers will read this and I am concerned that they will look for some kind of magic formula. It worries me. I remember going someplace to read where they were so awed by a "professional" writer that they weren't listening to what I was trying to say. I could have been reading the telephone book. I don't like this. I want, in the young, arrogance and a sense of peerage. I don't want hierarchy. Anybody who writes is, in function if not in quality, a peer of anyone else who

writes, if they are making a serious attempt to write what is true without whining. We can all learn from each other. It is not an isolated life. Then, I want them to know that it takes a great deal longer than they might be prepared for. There's no formula and there is no such thing as an easy life after fame comes. You are still in a room alone; you are still facing the white paper. There's no difference. And you had better not take your reviews into the room with you. To chase fame or approval is to do something else; it hasn't to do with writing, and I'm not concerned with it. Writing is its own act, not its rewards, not its pitfalls—like the whale is the whale and not its metaphor.

—John Crane

Four Poems by Joe Sheerin

In a Primary School

Because silence is unguarded and truth
Has an odd way of putting his snout
In at times like this I teach the children
All I know about the planets.

In the centre is the sun with his hat on
and a smile on his yellow cheeks.

Nearby Mercury the liar blowing hot and cold
small as a hailstone and throwing a long shadow.

Next comes Venus of the soft hips lying
low in the evening and too hot to handle.

Now the earth seen from a great distance
looking like a shelled pea, so small and O so alone.

And Mars the warrior red in broken armour
The dried up beds of things that almost were.

And then Jupiter the king of the gods, the King
Kong of planets with his thirteen handmaidens.

And Saturn the wise god juggling
his seven moons like ping pong balls.

And Uranus the arsehole discovered
by Herschel in seventeen eighty one.

And Neptune the king of the mists
out there beyond the reaching finger of Jesus.

And Pluto the dog limping his two
and a half centuries around the perimeter of time.

Now draw and colour in a picture
Of the universe and put an X on the spot
Where you think our school is.

Beatitudes

Having everything except love
and money I count my blessings
on the fingers of both hands.

First there are the trees that kiss
cheeks and shake their flounced petticoats.
I bend one little finger to the palm.

For the fliers that unzip the slinks of night
and the bullfinch that dresses up the morning;
two more fingers make half a fist.

I count another on the sight of horses streaming;
the index, the trigger happy, the wind finder,
the Don Juan, the explorer, the reader in the dark.

The luxury of green silence. I count this
on the stubby thumb, the pipe's tump,
the bell push, the inside nipple, the counter of notes.

One fist made I lower my sights
to the left hand the sinister one. I count
now the misfortunes of my neighbour.

His travail of love, his loss of morning kissing,
the greenness of jealousy; the demands of the part-paid
past and the fear of the long unpaid for future.

I raise my fists of blessings. Only two
to go, I scan the pavement for coins. Behind
me in a lighted window love sits out my search.

To Interest Your Children

in ornithology capture a blackbird
alive in your orchard having first
lured it under a basket with milk and honey.

Stun it slightly with a blow to the nape
of the skull and invite your children
to gather round to admire your knowledge.

Take it first by its pin feathers
stretching them taut across the back.
Hold it high above your head dark and
threatening against the high ceiling.

It is an awesome sight for small
faces gazing upwards into the dark
where hag fingers grasp straws of air.

Lower it to fold the wings and
wedge it under your nursing arm. Let them
trail their fingers across the frail head and
down the pouting breast practicing things to come.

Look at the eyes, burnished black beads
and the sharp yellow of the beak and inside,
if you press at the hinge of the jaw,
a slither of pink tongue made for singing.

Now revive it with sal volatile and
release it, (if after so
much admiration it will ever want to go).

Vespers

The taste of old communion wine the
Dregs of sacrament whets my appetite.

Recalled from the atheism of small things
Where each cause was appointed, now
Like new intoxication you fill my body to the neck.

I imagine your slenderness, curved where
One wrist dips to your hand and your other
Bare arm arranged slanting from shoulder to lap.

This should be a feast night a votive mass
With incense and waxlight and the too
And fro of whisper and response. Your feet
Uncovered under the vestments of your nightdress.

Something draws me to you the tug of experience
In the emporium of your remembered taste and touch.
The paradise of your lips open. A pin
Full of archangels on each point of your eyes.

Thomas Frick

Sleep

mem. Ted Spagna

Best of all things are the lights in the sky
but what I am seeking is sleep.
Or not sleep exactly,
because of the dreams and the damage they do,
but *places* to sleep, on the ground,
in the middles of cities that are strange to me:
cots that cost nothing, whatever the slant,
spots that are mine at nightfall,
favorable places the size of my body,
where grass grows out of the brickwork,
under the stars or the lights of the tunnels.

John Ash

Scenes From Schumann

As in an old memoir, the rhododendrons were over.
Hunger persisted, and the light was weak—
the light of music and books, the light paintings cast
on bowls of fruit and table cloths, to make them ours . . .

So the black dish was upturned,
and a fragment of it rolled with the peaches into
burnt grass nearby. It had been a long summer, and now
a glass vase in the shape of a hand stood up against

the perspective of hills and rain, dogs and day-lillies.
We had known about the storm, perhaps for a century
before it happened, so much had been gathered in,
protected
under awnings and arcades, yet the paintings were
streaked,

and the scores curled into oblivion. It was impossible
to imagine the birth of the orchestra, as we once knew it:
it was a friend who had become many strangers, each
with a hat or facial feature, a scream or sigh

like the opening of a door that must remain shut.
We were all looking out from the windows of the library
towards the river that is not a river. The narrow lawn
looked very green after the rains, and the white chairs

were night-animals caught in search lights.
The urns showed well against the blue of the river,
and, beyond them, the ruins of the old insane asylum,
covered in leaves, in the bronze colour of their bricks—

fading, as the lights came on in loops along the bridge,
festive as the illuminations of childhood. But
the vignettes were out of focus, the anecdotes faltered; the
words
took off like birds from our lips, to circle an absence

that couldn't be named without turning the feast to ashes.
Not that the talk died. No, it grew brighter, like lights
reflected
in swift, dark water. Only, at intervals, we seemed to hear
the river recalling the desolate passage of a bridal barge.

Melissa Green

The Consolation of Boethius

I dreamt my love was lost, uncomforted.
He lay alone in Pavia, eclipsed
by fortune, by the catastrophic tides
of men, by Caesar's imminent collapse,

so long forgotten, left so long to grieve,
his body was its own sarcophagus,
the deep, impenetrable cell his grave.
Nothing moved but wind through starlit grass.

Insensibly, as mist across a marsh,
I came to weep with him and called his name,
my fingers swimming through a dreamer's mesh
too weak to drum his deafened tympanum.

Between the bars of summer moonlight, domed
like Saul on the Damascus Road, sheared
of custom, shorn of sense, my love lay damned,
despair his brutal, bloodless vanquisher.

His shadow seemed a white-haired Senator
who calmly bends above the bath he's drawn,
his last campaign a test of temperature
where courage and the taste of salt will drown,

who drops his tunic from his sword-scarred flanks,
the royal purple marbling with rose.
A cockroach jousting with a blot of ink
defiles his final parchment as it dries.

I saw his face search out the Pleiades,
 his sockets guttering a prayer, for hope,
 for consolation. When the spirit dies
 before the flesh, it sheds a haunted shape.

His voice, beginning as a murdered oath,
 refused to void the carnage he surveyed,
 and suddenly it swelled to challenge death,
 a trumpet on the pass at Roncevaux.

I heard him rail, "Give over, heart, and howl!
 She will not come again. I site the shell
 of heaven's ear, in every shaft I hurl
Sophia—thousands do not dent the shield.

I wept in fever once until she came.
 Her kisses quenched my burning heart, she prayed,
 and with her tender lips' viaticum,
 I lived, and wrote, the ghost of her reply.

But now indenture's thumbscrew, loved of saints,
 a host of fiends and frenzies, undisguised,
 collude and so beguile me from my sense,
 the great circumference of the world is squeezed

into the skull I hold in both my hands.
 My first and last companions, grief and rage,
 defeated, dwindle down to candle ends
 in hammered sconces Faith, the kitchen drudge,

forgot to douse. They blink contentedly
 beside the crawling tankard and the crumbs.
 Such little lamps to stay a constant law.
 Too small to light the hardwood of my crimes.

Such tiny stars, extinguishing like snow
 that flecks a dead love's hair. Twin sparks I place
 midship. Two lanterns that can't guide me now.
 White noons that trespass on my darker peace.

Desire sighs upon the wicks, it fans
 exhaustion, feathers up in hope, ascends
 in fervent wingbeats toward the rafters, finds
 the scaffolded cathedral of my hands—

Sophia, Virgin, Sister, intercede!
 You said ill fortune draws a man to God
 with grappling hooks, but God has turned aside
 and left me barbed and dangling at the gate.

I've wished for everything on earth and failed.
 All writing burns. My words won't come again.
 But I would give all language up to feel
 small comfort from the rustle of your gown.

This fractured roofline frets, the brightness stirs,
 not with the suspiration of my prayer
 but my breathless unbelief—those stars
 are paper fixed in vaults of priories

that sparkle in the zodiac by day
 but die by night, a mockery of stars.
 Oh God, I haven't got the heart to die,
 or travel heavenward on golden stairs.

I've lifted up my eyes and cannot see—
 Sophia, where's salvation? What's my crown?"
 He read the silence of the earth and sky,
 and died, because he did not know I'd come.

from Killing Mister Watson

Peter Matthiessen

October 24, 1910

Sea birds are aloft again, a tattered few. The bonewhite terns look dirtied in the somber light and they fly stiffly, feeling out an element they no longer trust. Unable to locate the storm-lost minnows, they wander the thick waters with sad muted cries, hunting signs and seamarks that might return them to the order of the world.

In the hurricane's wake, the labyrinthine coast where the Everglades' deltas meet the Gulf of Mexico lay broken, stunned, flattened to mud by the wild tread of God, and afterward, that battered coast lay sprawled in awful fever under a leaden sky, how its scattered creatures had peered fearfully about in a terrible stillness as if God had died.

Day after day, a gray and brooding wind nags at the mangroves, hurrying the unruly tides that hunt through the broken islands and twist far back into the creeks, leaving behind brown spume and matted salt grass, choked fish, driftwood. On the bay shores and down the coastal rivers, a far gray sun

picks up bead glints from windrows of rotted mullet, heaped a foot high.

From the island settlement on the old Indian mound called Chokoloskee, a baleful and uneasy sky out toward the Gulf looks ragged as a ghost, unsettled, wandering. The sky is low, withholding rain, and vultures on black-fingered wings tilt back and forth over the broken trees. At the channel edge, where docks and pilings, stove-in boats, uprooted shacks litter the shore, odd pieces torn away from their old places have been strained from the flood by the limbs over the water. A clothesline flutters in the trees; thatched roofs are spun onto their poles like old straw brooms; frame buildings sag. In the dank air a sharp fish stink is infused with corruption of dead animals and blackened vegetables, of excrement in overflowing pits from which shack privies have been washed away. Pots, kettles, crockery, a butter churn, tin tubs, buckets, salt-slimed boots, soaked horsehair mattresses, and ravished dolls are strewn across the pale killed ground.

A lone gull picks disconsolate at the softening mullet along shore, a dog barks without heart at so much silence. A figure in mud-fringed calico, calling a child, stoops to retrieve a Bible, then wipes wet grime from the Good Book with pale dulled fingers. She straightens, turning slowly, staring toward the south. From the wall of mangroves far off down the bay, the drum of the boat engine comes and goes, then comes again, a little louder.

"Oh, Lord," she whispers, half-aloud. "Oh no, please no, sweet Jesus."

Along toward low gray-yellow twilight, Postmaster Smallwood, on his knees beneath his store, is raking out the last of his drowned chickens. What the hurricane has left of Smallwood's dock—a few poor pilings—sticks out at angles off the end of the spoil bank where he'd dug his canal for Indian canoes. From there the pewter water spreads away to the black walls of mangrove on all sides.

He crouches in the putrid heat. Voices are whispering, as at a funeral. One pair of bare feet, then another, pass in si-

lence on the way down to the landing. He knows his neighbors by their gait and britches. Over the whispering, over short breaths, comes the drumming of the motor, softened by distance, east through Rabbit Key Pass from the Gulf of Mexico. In a shift of wind, the *pot-pot-pot* comes hard as a pulse, as if he heard his heart for the first time.

Three days before, when that boat had headed south, all ten families on the island watched it go. Smallwood was the only man to wave, but he, too, prayed that this would be the end of it, that the broad figure at the helm, sinking into darkness at the far low line of trees, would disappear forever from their lives.

Said Old Man D. D. House, "He will be back."

The House clan lives one hundred yards away, east of the store. Ted Smallwood sees his father-in-law's black Sunday boots descend the Indian mound, with Bill House and Young Dan and Lloyd barefoot behind. Calling his sister, Bill climbs the porch and enters the store and post office, which has the Smallwood family rooms upstairs. Feet creak on the pine floor overhead.

In the steaming heat, in the onset of malaria, Smallwood feels so sickly weak that when his rump emerges and he tries to stand, blood thumps his temples and the trees go black. He is a big man and bangs heavily against the wall of his frame house, causing his wife, somewhere inside, to cry out in alarm. Slowly he straightens, arches his stiff back. He takes a deep and dreadful breath, gags, coughs, and shudders. He hawks the sweet taste of chicken rot from his mouth and nostrils.

"Look what come crawling out! Ain't that the postmaster?"

The postmaster's spade, jammed at the black earth by way of answer, grates on old white oyster shells of the huge midden. Again he jams it, and it glances off a root. The House boys laugh.

"Keep that spade handy, boy. Might gone to need it."

Ted Smallwood says, "Got four rifles there, I see. Think that's enough?"

The old man stops to contemplate his son-in-law. Daniel David House has silver in his brows and his mustache juts into

ax-head sideburns. Though he wears no collar underneath his beard, he is dressed as if for Sunday, in white shirt, shiny black frock coat, wiped boots, and stiff black pants hauled high by galluses. He stands apart from the sandy, slow-eyed boys delivered him by the former Ida Borders.

"Where's his missus, then?" the old man says.

"She's right inside here with her young 'uns. With your daughter and granddaughters, Mr. House." When the old man grunts and turns away, Ted's voice goes higher. "Them women and children gone to have 'em a good view!"

Henry Short, expressionless, moves past, holding his rifle down along his leg.

"You, too?"

"Leave Henry be," says Bill House, coming out. Bill House is thirty, a strong florid man creased hard by the sun.

Mamie Smallwood has followed Bill outside. When her brother turns to calm her, the plump young woman cries, "Let me alone!" She weeps. "Where is her little boy? He's only *three!*"

Old Man Dan shakes his big head and keeps on going, refusing to listen any more. Young Dan and Lloyd follow him close, down toward the shore.

A young woman comes around the house. "Mr. Smallwood? Please? Tell me what's happening?" When the postmaster stands mute, she cries, "Oh Lord!" and runs off again. She is still calling her boy.

The island men are gathering, twenty or more. All have shotguns or rifles.

Charlie T. Boggess, who twisted his ankle in the hurricane, is limping. "All right, woman, all *right!*" he shouts, to his wife's calling. To the postmaster he says, "Why couldn't he keep right on going? To Key West!"

Ted says, "Don't hear Ethel hollering? You best hobble home, take care that ankle."

Isaac Yeomans, coming by, says, "Key West? Nosir! That feller ain't the kind likes to back up." Isaac is fiery; he looks

almost cheerful about what the others dread. "You recall Sam Lewis, Ted? At Lemon City?"

Smallwood nods. "They lynched Sam Lewis, too."

Bill House stops on the steps. "This ain't no mob!"

"Don't think so?" The postmaster pitches his voice toward Bill's father. "What if he's just coming back here to pick up his family and keep right on going?"

Bill House says, "Keep right on going, Ted, just like you say, and do the same thing somewheres else."

"Mr. Smallwood? Have you seen little Addison?"

The men turn their backs to the young woman and stare away toward the south. The oncoming boat is a small dark burr in the pewter light of Chokoloskee Bay.

Henry Short leans his 30.30 Winchester into a fork of the big fish-fuddle that the hurricane has felled across the clearing. The gun is hidden when he leans against the tree, and his arms are folded as if in sign that none of this is any of his business.

Twilight gathers behind the coming boat. The armed men stand half-hidden in the undergrowth, too tense to slap at the mosquitoes. In the dusk of a dark day, in the tree shadow, the postmaster can no longer make out faces beneath the old and broken hats. His neighbors seem anonymous as outlaws.

Not slowing, the boat winds in among the oyster bars. The helmsman stands in silhouette, his broad hat forward on his head.

Isaac Yeomans breaks his shotgun and sights down the barrels, pops two shells in, sets his felt hat. "Seems like you ought to throw in with us, Ted." Isaac is gazing out over the water. "We're in friendship with him too. We don't care for this no more'n you do."

"He pays his bills, plays fair with me. I ain't got a single thing agin him." Smallwood speaks urgently to Yeomans and to Boggess who have been his friends for fifteen years. "You boys never had no trouble with him, and you can't hit nothing anyway. Put them damn guns down."

Others hesitate beside the store, as if loath to go down to the landing. They have worn the same shirts for a week, they are scared and cranky, they are anxious to involve Ted Smallwood. At the very least, the postmaster's participation might make what might happen more respectable: if no one is innocent, none can be guilty.

Storm refugees from Lost Man's River stand back by the store porch, a hundred yards from the boat landing.

One calls, "Looks like y'all are fixing to gun him down." He is a tall and sunworn man, lanky as a dog.

Another man nods urgently, clearing his throat. "Thought you fellers was aiming to get deputized! Thought you was aiming to *arrest* him!"

"Won't *let* hisself get arrested," Bill House says. "Men here found that out the other day."

"Best if nobody hangs back!" calls Old Dan House.

One man says, "I believe Ted knows what must be done as good as we do. He just don't want no part of it." Another cackles, "Why, hell, Ted bushwhacking ain't nothing to be scared of! Not with his one against two dozen!"

"Maybe I ain't scared the way you think. Maybe *I'm* scared of killing in cold blood."

"*He* ain't scared of cold blood, Ted. Colder the better."

"Ain't nobody proved that in a court of law!"

"Ain't no law down here to prove it by."

Behind the men skulk ragged boys with slingshots and single-shot .22s. Shouted at, they slink into the trees and circle back, bright-eyed as coons.

In his old leaf-colored clothes, in the brown shadows at the wood edge, Henry Short has sifted in against the tree bark like a chuck-will's-widow shuffling soft wings. He seems intent on the white furrow where the dark boat parts the gray chop of the channel, and the rifle-fire *pot-pot-pot*, loud and louder. The silhouette of the lone boatman rises slowly on the evening sky.

The women are calling from the wood. Old Man Dan calls to his son-in-law, "If you're his friend, go find his little feller!"

Smallwood longs to shout, *Goddam you, Mr. House! I am the postmaster!*

He circles through the wind-stripped trees. The wood is hushed, the last birds mute, the dogs gone still. Only mosquitoes are abroad, keening in the twisted gumbo-limbos.

He calls and calls.

A razorback hog grunts abruptly, once, in the startled silence.

The young mother follows him back to the house and goes inside. In white aprons, behind the salt-dark screen, the women loom like ghosts. Neither weeps. Their little daughters tug softly at their skirts. The children's eyes stare toward the boat over sucked thumbs.

Smallwood pushes past, indoors, not sure where he is headed. His wife is gripping the hand of the boy's mother. "Ought to keep him home," he says. When he bangs his lantern, Mamie raises a finger to her lips, as if the man out in the boat might hear.

"Daddy's the one behind this ain't he?" she whispers. "Bill and Dan, too!"

Smallwood slaps a mosquito, lifts his fingers, investigates the blood. "Light that smudge," he says. Little Thelma runs to the crumpled bucket of black mangrove charcoal damped with earth.

He gazes at his plum Mamie Ulala, ignoring the young woman, who appears entranced. He says, "They're all behind it. All but the men from Lost Man's."

This dark day has been coming down forever. Even the young woman, in her pale foreboding, seems to know this. The day is late, and a life runs swiftly to its end.

"They want an end to it," he mutters.

Little Thelma and her friend Ruth Ellen stand in the corner, guarding the toddlers from something scary. Ruth Ellen's mother clutches Baby Amy, born five months before down at Key West. "Ad," she whispers to the missing boy. "Oh, please."

The motor dies, in a long wash of silence. "Daddy," Thelma says, starting to whimper. When the postmaster takes her up into his arms, she sucks her thumb. Beside himself, he

thrusts her at her mother and follows the young woman back outside. He cannot stop yawning.

Seen through the broken branches, in the onshore wind, the launch coasts down on Smallwood's landing, just west of where the dock had been before the storm. His heart pounds so, that the boatman must surely feel it and take warning, must sense the islanders in the dark trees.

In the last light the postmaster sees little Addison hid in the sea-grape, spying on all those grown-up men with guns. Smallwood's voice breaks when he calls the boy, and goes unheard. Hurrying down the steps, he does not call again.

What had he feared? That his neighbors would denounce his call as a shout of warning?

Warned or not, this man would come in anyway.

Now Henry Short glides like a shadow from the trees, crossing behind the men, down to the shore. He wades without a splash into the water, just to the right of Bill House and Bill's father.

A suck and wash as the bow wave slaps ashore. Time stops, spun upward in a vortex. Smallwood's heart caroms, his hands rise to his ears.

The boat stem crunches old dead mollusks. Silence.

A quiet greeting, an exchange of voices. The men drift forward, spreading out along the water. Smallwood gasps for breath. The postmaster's relief is mixed, without elation.

Soon Mamie and her friend venture outside. They talk and smile to ease their nerves, starting down the little slope toward the water.

A twig snaps and the twilight stiffens. A hard shift, the whip crack of a shot, two shots together. There is time for an echo, time for a high shriek, before the last evening of the old days in the Islands flies apart in a volley of wild fire.

The young woman stands formally before his house, as for a picture, brown dress darkened by the dusk, face pale as salt.

Mamie runs to her, but it is she who takes the sobbing Mamie to her bosom, strokes her hair, regards the postmaster over his wife's shoulder without the mercy of a single blink.

She appears calm. It is Mamie who has shrieked; he can still hear it. He wanders toward them, feeling weak and shy.

Mamie twists away from him, mouth working. In a low and awful voice she says, "*I'm leaving! I am leaving this godforsaken place! I'm leaving!*" The children stare. He shoos the little girls inside, to the staccato of boys' hoots and scared dogs barking. When little Thelma whines, he shakes her hard. "Inside, I said!" At the fury of his voice, her face disintegrates, she runs into the house.

The young woman goes to her little boy, who has tripped and fallen in his wailing flight and has patches of hurricane mud daubed on his knees. She pulls him to her, as if away from the armed men, who are milling in the dark like one great animal. Some turn to stare.

In a moment, she will crawl under the house, dragging her brood into the chicken slime and darkness. But for the moment she still stands before the house, hugging her boy.

"No, Lord," she whispers, as the terror overtakes her.

"Oh, dear God," she moans.

"Oh Lord!" she cries. "They are killing Mister Watson!"

from The Last World

Christoph Ransmayr

Cyparis the Lilliputian came at noon out of the dust clouds of the coastal road, out of the year's first cold dust. As in every year before, Cyparis drove along the shore, two duns harnessed to his covered wagon, and with his whip he traced menacing, mad figures in the air, screaming at the people of Tomi the names of heroes and beautiful women. This was how, still from afar, the dwarf announced pleasure, pain, and grief, and all the passions of the films whose light he would beam on the peeling whitewashed walls of the slaughterhouse in the darkness of the days ahead. Cyparis the projectionist was coming. But it was spring. In the brandy cellar or in the hot glow of a forge, in Fama's grocery or in the twilight of a storehouse — there, everywhere in Tomi, people stopped what they were doing, stepped outside or opened the window, and looked in bewilderment at the dust drifting slowly toward them. The projectionist. For the first time, Cyparis was coming in spring and not in August.

This time too, as every year before, a stag — tired, emaciated, and bound to the wagon with a long rope — trotted behind the team. In all the villages along the coast, the Lilliputian showed

this stag as the Royal Beast of his homeland, which, as he told it, lay somewhere in the shadow of the Caucasus. He would make the animal dance on its hind legs to the tune of jingling marches. After the stunt, he often pulled the stag's massive head down to him, whispering in its ear in a strange, tender language. And every year he sold the molted antlers to the highest bidder in the villages, to some trophy collector or other, for whom the cast-off rack serves as emblem and skeleton of a frustrated passion for the hunt—for there were no stags in the impassable, thorny woods of this stretch of coast.

In the square outside Fama's shop, the old and the idle—as well as several of the ashen-faced people from the beach procession and sooty, bashful children—gathered around the projectionist's team. Battus, Fama's son, sniffed the horses' steaming flanks and with the flat of his hand brushed the foam from their nostrils. Why so early, the people in the crowd remarked, asked, while Cyparis unharnessed the duns. Why not at his regular time of year? And the saddle blanket there, the beautiful pictures on the canvas and the brass of the bridles, all so different and new? All so beautiful.

Cyparis led the horses to a stone-rimmed pond from which coots flew up, threw the stag some chestnuts and a handful of dried rosebuds, and, as always, went about his chores chatting quietly in a tone of voice alien to the town of iron. Why should a man such as he, Cyparis, submit to the dictates of the season and wait till summer to make his appearance? On the contrary, it was summer that was waiting for him. Wherever Cyparis appeared, it was always August. And he laughed. The bridle? He had got that in exchange for three shows at the Byzantium Fair—a gem. And it was there, too, that a scenery painter had decorated his wagon's canvas with the Death of Actaeon—a Greek hunter, an idiot, who had met his idiotic end in the fangs of his own bloodhounds. This deep red here, the splash across the draped canvas, that sheen—all hunter's blood. And he laughed.

This was typical of the Lilliputian—the way most of the inhabitants of Tomi knew him. Everything he said was a story, whether the topic was his comings and goings or the delicate

mechanism of his projector shimmering dull black in the tulle-lined crate where he kept it. His machine—Cyparis could hitch human destinies to it and transpose them whirring into the bustling world, into life. And so each year, under the dwarf's deft hands, there appeared on Tereus' wall a world that, to the people of the town of iron, seemed so distant from their own, so unattainable and magical, that for weeks after Cyparis had disappeared into the vastness of time, their only stories were versions and recountings of the films whose light had now gone out for another year.

Cyparis loved his audience. When, after tedious preparations, the projector magnified the face of a hero to gigantic size and the slaughterhouse wall became a window onto jungles and deserts, the Lilliputian would sit hidden in the darkness and watch the spectators' faces in the blue reflected light. At times he thought he recognized in their pantomime the power of his own unrealizable longings. There in the dark, Cyparis—even drawn to full height, he stood face-to-face only with cripples, with people stooped low or forced to their knees, and for him a watchdog was as big as a calf—yearned to be slender, tall, and majestic. He wanted to stand tall. And Cyparis—who had driven his team through more towns and across high moors and desolate wastes deeper into strange lands than a smelter in Tomi could possibly imagine—longed for the depths of the earth and, at the same time, for the heights of the clouds, for some immovable spot beneath an immovable sky. During the show he sometimes fell asleep over such longings and dreamed of trees, of cedars, poplars, cypresses, dreamed that he bore moss on his hard, fissured skin. Then his toenails would crack open, and roots would creep from his crooked legs and, quickly growing strong and tough, begin to bind him deeper and deeper to the spot. The protective rings of years formed around his heart. He grew.

And when the rattle of an empty reel or the flapping of a torn strip of celluloid awakened him with a start, Cyparis could still feel the fine creaking of wood in his limbs, that last, slight quiver of a tree with a gust of wind trapped and dying in its crown. In those confused moments of awakening, when

he could still sense the earth's solace and coolness on his feet even as his hands were reaching for reels, wing nuts, and lights, Cyparis the Lilliputian was happy.

In Tomi the only large buildings were the slaughterhouse and a gloomy church, a stack of sandstone blocks. Its nave was decorated with damp wreaths of paper flowers, mildewing pictures, statues of saints contorted as if numbed by dreadful tortures, and an iron figure of the Redeemer, which turned so cold in the winter that the lips of the desperate worshipers who kissed its feet sometimes froze fast to it. Except for the slaughterhouse and the church, however, there was no hall, no room, that could have held the projectionist's audience, let alone his splendid, enormous images.

And so on the evening of this unusually mild April day—a time of year when an ice storm might just as easily have come out of the northeast to rip at the shutters and set glass rattling far into the depths of their houses—the people of Tomi sat outside on wooden benches behind the slaughterhouse and waited for the start of the first of the dramas that Cyparis had been advertising all afternoon. The noise of cicadas crackled from a loudspeaker tied with wire to the branches of a pine tree. The spectators sat pressed tightly together. Many of them were wrapped in horsehair blankets, and as in winter, the breath fled from their mouths cloudy and white. But around the projector panicked moths swarmed as they had on the summer nights of years past. When one of them met its death on the hot glass, a ringlet of smoke rose up. And Fama the grocer thought she spotted a summer constellation in the chaos of the sky. Finally there was light on Tereus' wall. It was indeed August. . . .

Panning slowly, the camera glided deep into the countryside, brushed above pine forests, across black hills rolling into the distance, the roofs of farms, then down long crests of surf, swung to follow the crescents of beaches, and now, gliding again under the deep shade of a boulevard, closed in on a palace that lay in the night like a festive, illumined ship—domes, arcades, sweeping staircases, hanging gardens. The focus became more precise for a leisurely inspection of the pilasters

and cornices of a facade, when a narrow open window suddenly appeared at its fuzzy outer edge. As if caught by a rip-tide, the camera flew toward this window and came briefly to rest in a dimly lit chamber on the countenance of a young man, on a mouth. And the mouth said: I'm leaving. Now the camera lowered, swung to one side, where a woman stood leaning against a door. She whispered: Stay. Battus moaned when he saw the tears in her eyes. Fama pulled her son closer to her, laid a hand on his brow, calmed him. In the palace gardens the cicadas were loud and the lemon trees heavy with fruit. But the heat from basins of glowing coals that had been carried out behind the slaughterhouse was gradually assuming the smell of blood and sewage. Those sad figures on Tereus' wall, they must be noble people. Twice Fama asked their names, although they had been mentioned some time before amid the crackle and gurgle of the loudspeaker. She was named Alcyone, and he Ceyx. And the tender and sad farewell they took of one another was unlike any a man had ever taken of his wife here in the coastal town of iron.

Why was that gentleman up there leaving?—this evening's audience only grudgingly tried to understand. They grumbled and signaled their displeasure to the projectionist. They watched the lovers embrace, hold one another, watched them there on the whitewashed wall, in loose attire and then naked as well, and they comprehended only that there was great pain in that chamber muffled by tapestries. Then they realized they were just as perplexed as Alcyone that a man could leave when he loved.

To be sure, Ceyx, who ruled over this palace, over this land of night and the watch fires burning behind stockades and in courtyards, did speak of his own great confusion and of his hope of a consoling oracle, spoke of a pilgrimage to Delphi . . . or was it a crusade, a war? In any case, he spoke of having to journey across the sea. He was leaving. All the rest was of no significance.

As news of Ceyx's departure escaped the narrow chambers and corridors and reached the courtyards, things got noisy. Drunken stableboys chased women whose soup and hot spiced

wine they had laced with hippomanes, in the belief that this aphrodisiac brew would at last drive into their arms by night those who had fled them by day. From the ramparts could be heard the laughter of the guards, who were flushing every threat from their minds by taking long, burning pulls on a demijohn passed from trench to trench. At midnight, fire broke out in one of the stalls. The flames were just barely kept secret from the palace and smothered by the swineherds. The servants, the whole court, had begun to free themselves from their lord, his laws and ordinances—as if he had left long ago, had disappeared.

The splendor of Ceyx's power had reached deep into that August night. The mere dazzle of the splendor had sufficed to hold together the framework of his rule. His guards had watched in silence, his servants had obeyed in silence. But now that framework began to turn brittle, indeed to collapse, as if in every trench, on every rampart and battlement, the flag of premonition had been planted: This time the lord is departing for good.

Ceyx did not seem to have energy left even to comfort his wife. Six, seven weeks perhaps, he whispered drowsily, and hid his face on Alcyone's shoulder. A few weeks, then he would return a happy man, happy and unharmed. And Alcyone nodded in tears. Black and beautiful and light as a feather, a brigantine rose and fell in the shimmering water of the harbor. Torches smoked along the railing, and sometimes, below deck, the chains of sleeping animals rattled. Exhausted, Ceyx fell asleep in Alcyone's arms.

Into this peaceful scene Tereus from his seat bawled a filthy remark, which failed to gain approval. No one laughed. But neither did anyone tell him to be quiet when he bellowed a litany of suggestions to the unhappy pair. Tereus had a nasty temper and brooked no opposition. They had watched him today—it was killing day—working for hours in the bloody foam of the stream. Standing in its shallows, he smashed open the skulls of bulls. When his ax landed with a crack between the eyes of the fettered beast, every other sound was so inconsequential that even the rushing torrent seemed to halt for a

moment, transformed into silence. When at day's end, filthy and befouled, he loaded his truck with neatly hacked carcasses while his dogs scuffled by the brook for scraps of offal, Tereus was so weary, unpredictable, and irritable that anyone who could avoid him did. And on this evening, too, fat and pale, lost in watching these farewells, Procne sat beside him—his wife. The butcher would sometimes disappear from Tomi for days on end, and it was a poorly kept secret that he was cheating on his wife with some nameless whore or other, though only a shepherd had heard her screaming, just once, high up in the mountains. Only Procne seemed to suspect nothing. Sickly but uncomplaining, she accompanied her spouse through their ugly life and did what he demanded of her. Her only protection against Tereus was a growing corpulence. This once slender woman seemed to be gradually disappearing into fat that she pampered with salves and essential oils. Tereus beat her often, without a word and without anger, as if she were an animal entrusted to him for slaughter, as if the sole purpose of each blow was to numb what scant will she had left, to numb the disgust she felt for him. On the very day of their wedding, the people of Tomi had seen portents of evil. On the top of their roof had sat—large, immobile, and fearless—an owl, the bird of ill omen, boding a dark future for any bride and groom. At last Tereus fell silent.

Alcyone lay as if lifeless beside her sleeping husband. She watched with eyes open and risked no movement that might give the sighing and dreaming sleeper cause to turn from her. Now she was alone with visions of her fears. And Cyparis' projector made visible each vision that she had conjured up herself all evening long in hope of persuading Ceyx to stay or at least to consent that she accompany him and perish with him. Alcyone beheld a sea by night and a sky in ruins, waves and clouds jumbled in uniform rage, rising up like mountains, then tumbling to the rhythm of her breath. Spindrift avalanches roared down the steep. Alcyone saw sails ripping apart, heavy with rain, each seam strangely precise, each thread of canvas. A mast split in silence. Then a torrent as violent as the brook cascading through Tomi broke over the gangway

into the darkness between decks. Through the hatches, arms of water thick as tree trunks reached inside the ship. A gust of wind flung an albatross far above the doomed ship, broke its wings somewhere on high, and tossed a mass of flesh and feather back into the water. When, in a flash of lightning, the horizon reappeared for a moment or two, its former gentle, peaceful line was jagged with crests of waves, like the blade of a saw ruined by a nail concealed within the wood. Above the sawteeth rose the smoke of a new black sky, approaching in frenzy and finally closing over everything that had not belonged to the sea from the very beginning. The ship sank. And whatever had gone overboard or had been able momentarily to save itself followed in slow, then ever more rapid spirals into the deep. In the end all that was left spinning in the whirlpools and waterspouts was sand from the sea floor. It was grandiose, and ridiculous.

The audience on the wooden benches knew about storms on the Black Sea, and as the catastrophe unfolded they were all quick to agree that the scene blustering across Tereus' wall was a poor fake, that the ocean up there was in fact probably only tepid water churned in a tub and the sunken ship no bigger than a toy. The people of Tomi were, to be sure, familiar with fakery of this or other sorts, knew about trick photography, and during the tedium of the year often longed for such deceptive variety. But what Cyparis was showing this evening dealt with something they could verify, their own life, the calamities of the coast and the sea . . . why, even dim-witted Battus could see that there was nothing believable about these storm scenes. Toy masts were broken, toy sails rent. Even the great stormwind had probably come from a windwheel, like the fan that the dwarf used to cool the blazing lamps of his apparatus. Last year, Tereus' son Itys had mutilated a finger by sticking it into the whirl of that fan. The blades had dispersed his blood over the dwarf's projector in a thousand tiny droplets.

The disaster was unmasked. When Cyparis realized that his drama was in danger of running out of steam, he turned up the volume on the music and the howls of the storm—and drowned out his audience's coarse jokes.

Only now, in the midst of this new outbreak of fury, did Alcyone discover her beloved. Clinging to a scrap of lumber, Ceyx was drifting alone in the spray. In his hair seaweed glistened, on his shoulders sea anemones and mussels perched. He stretched out one bloody hand to Alcyone and opened his mouth to scream. No sound came. And so Alcyone screamed for him. And awoke. And saw Ceyx, breathing deep and calm beside her on the bed. But it was no consolation to see him lying there.

The next morning, flags swung their weary way to the harbor. They halted at the gangway of the brigantine. Ceyx went on board, turning around again and again on the short, steep gangway, and then stood for a long while leaning at the railing as the brigantine glided through a thick, sighing forest of masts and yardarms toward the open sea and out of sight. From this point, everything happened as it had been dreamed, but now in deeper, more lustrous colors.

The evening of the third day after setting sail, the storm arose out of the dream. Ceyx's comrades worked like madmen against their terrible end, grew desperate, hurled ballast and, at the last, offerings into the waves, but the ship was a wreck before it sank. The first to die was a sailmaker, who took his own life before the storm could. Others fought for their lives for an hour or more, and died as well. Finally Ceyx was indeed as alone as Alcyone had long since seen him. He was still clinging tight. And with each cough and gasp, her name and every hope drained from him. Then he perceived, or thought he did, that every solace lay in Alcyone's arms alone—not in Delphi, not in any shrine. How he longed for her and the ground on which she walked, for firm ground. Then he too went under. On the plank were flecks of blood and bits of tattered skin, which the water quickly rinsed away. Seabirds alighted on the wood and pecked at the scraps with their beaks. In the meantime the sea had grown calm.

Now it turned cold after all. The veil of fog that rose each evening from the shore got caught in the black trees of Tomi, in the labyrinth of its streets and in the wrought-iron ornaments. It would turn to hoarfrost during the night. The first

ice crystals glittered on the canvas of the projectionist's wagon. The coals in the basins still glowed, but weakly, and were not replenished. The audience knew the usual length of Cyparis' dramas, and surmising that this one was drawing to a close, they began to call out to each other how they thought it was going to end. Acknowledging defeat, Cyparis turned down the booming loudspeakers.

Alcyone's dream had come true. But still the widow sat with two women friends among laurels and tree roses on a veranda of the palace and sewed a dress that she hoped to wear at the celebration of Ceyx's return. Her thoughts raced far ahead of her handwork—she twined garlands, saw Ceyx coming up the steep avenue toward her, and spread her arms wide.

Dead! Battus yelled now, and laughed, happy that it was he, he, who knew so many important things well before that beauty up there did, before all the others. Dead! He's dead.

Every morning, every noon, and every evening Alcyone walked and ran along the coast, searing her eyes on the gleaming distance, and did not believe her own dreams. Her hopes waned, but very slowly, as slowly as life itself. And then came the day when a Spanish galley entered the harbor with five castaways on board. Like a fury Alcyone pushed her way through the crowd that thronged the docks. Howling, she shoved aside whatever stood in her way, as if there were still something to be saved—although the decision whether they were to drown or be saved had been made long ago. The faces of the shipwrecked men were ravaged by sun and salt. Their lips were white and their shoulders so raw that they wore no shirts but were simply swathed in broad, light-colored strips of linen slowly beginning to stain from their seeping burns. For twenty-three days—word spread on the dock—they had drifted on a flooded raft, had had almost nothing to eat the whole time and water to drink only twice, after cloudbursts. The rescued men staggered through the rows of the curious and did not respond to their shouts. One of them appeared to have gone crazy. He burst into laughter, then barked like a dog, flung his arms wide, and sprawled out on the cobblestones. They pulled him up, dragged him along. And suddenly

Alcyone thought she recognized Ceyx's features in that bruised face—there amid the sores and gashes Ceyx's eyes burned. Alcyone threw herself on the castaway's breast, felt his sweat on her brow, heard him groan, and saw at last that this was not Ceyx's face, but rather the face of death. The shipwrecked men were strangers. They knew nothing about a brigantine. They remembered no other disaster except their own sinking ship.

Alcyone did not return again to the palace. She stayed close to the sea, close to the breaking waves and her faith that a gracious current would at least lay Ceyx's corpse at her feet. In the next days, her servants hauled furniture, clothes, baskets full of bread, dried meats, and fruits into a cave whose entrance was between two towering cliffs feathered with gulls and pelicans. After performing this last duty, the servants ran off. Alcyone was left behind in the dark of the cave with only her friend, a maid, while outside, all along the coast, the domain of the missing lord went to ruin. Dressed in Ceyx's clothes, stableboys reeled along the quays and through the markets, aped his gestures and voice, and threw bottles and stones at his statue. The poor rampaged in the halls and arcades of the palace. Horses and swine, doves, peafowl, and even the lapdogs ran from their open cages, coops, stalls, and pens, and fled into the wilderness. What remained behind was dragged off or slaughtered. Alcyone took no notice of it all. She would sit huddled at the entrance of the cave or on the beach, staring out to sea, and suddenly leap up and run in the shallows at the edge of the surf, weeping and gasping for breath, until her maid fetched her and held in her arms the raving woman, no longer responsive to words of reassurance or comfort. Then the sea rolled gray and peaceful toward the two women—gray under a sky that at times turned high and huge, only to sink abruptly again and lie cold and impenetrable upon the water. Winter came on.

Several of the spectators, impatient or suddenly chilled, had got up from the benches and were warming themselves, stamping feet and flailing arms in front of the basins of dying coals, when one young woman in the front row let out a

terrified scream. It was Proserpina, a woman with a reputation in the town of iron for being man-crazy. Lets the cattle dealers leer at her like a cow, lets the amber hunters ogle her like a gem, Fama would comment behind her hand, behind her grocery counter. And hadn't she been making eyes at the stranger from Rome? Even though Proserpina had been engaged for years now to Thies—a German tossed up on these shores from some forgotten war. In Tomi he was known only as Moneybags, because twice a year the ship's mail brought him money, a disability pension. But the worst illness that Thies the German suffered from was an all-consuming homesickness for the marshes and low-lying forests of Friesland. He spoke often of Friesland when he was shearing sheep. Thies could also trim hair and beards, sew up wounds, mix salves, and he sold a medicinal green liqueur that he claimed came from the Carthusians of Switzerland. When such remedies proved futile and all other healing arts were exhausted, Thies buried the town's dead as well and built little stone domes over the graves. This evening Proserpina was sitting at a quarrelsome distance from her fiancé. She was still holding one hand pressed to her mouth and staring through a hole in a fog bank that drifted slowly across Tereus' wall, at a long white stretch of reef off the coast. There, laved only by delicate waves, lay Ceyx's corpse.

As if Proserpina's terrified cry had frightened her, Alcione, sitting as every day on the beach, now lifted her head and saw the dead man too. Suddenly, how close and clear her memory of his face—of every trait, every feature. Did that stranded corpse out there still resemble the portrait she wore on a medallion around her neck? As if demented, she stood up and began to run along the cliffs, the reefs. At last her mad racing had a goal. She leapt, she bounded, skipped from stone to stone and over the crevices in the rocks, flew past the shore boulders. And then the fog bank drifted farther and clouded the view. The audience lost sight of the frantic woman for one gasping moment and in the next saw only a bird launching itself above the cliffs, a kingfisher that hovered above the breakers, gave several graceful flaps of its wings, was above the corpse now, and eased down upon the breast torn open by

scavengers. Ceyx. His closed eyes bore rings of salt, and petals of salt had formed at the corners of his mouth. The kingfisher's pinions seemed to caress the ragged cheeks, the brow, the face that beaks had slashed. And suddenly something small and glistening sprang to life in that ravaged face, suddenly the purple and black of corruption faded, the putrid foam in the hair was now only a wreath of downy feathers—white, fresh down. Pearl eyes sprang open—eyes. From the surface of a sea engraved by a gentle breeze, a dainty head lifted, jerking to gaze about as if in amazement. A small, feathered body sat up fluttering its wings and shook off the water, the petals of salt, and the scabs. And the audience, seeing neither corpse nor mourning wife, but only two kingfishers soaring aloft, understood. Many of them laughed in relief, too, and clapped their hands. Titles appeared and faded. Names of actors, composers, makeup men, acknowledgments. Then Cyparis heard the clatter of the reel and reached for the switch. 'Tereus' wall went dark. It was night in Tomi. From the sea a raw wind was blowing and carried with it, high onto the slopes, the barking of dogs, the noise from the brandy cellar, and the chatter of the audience on its way home. But as it reached the scrubwood along the path to Trachila, the wind seemed to slough off the last noises from the town of iron, and turned blustery and empty.

—*translated from the German*
by John E. Woods

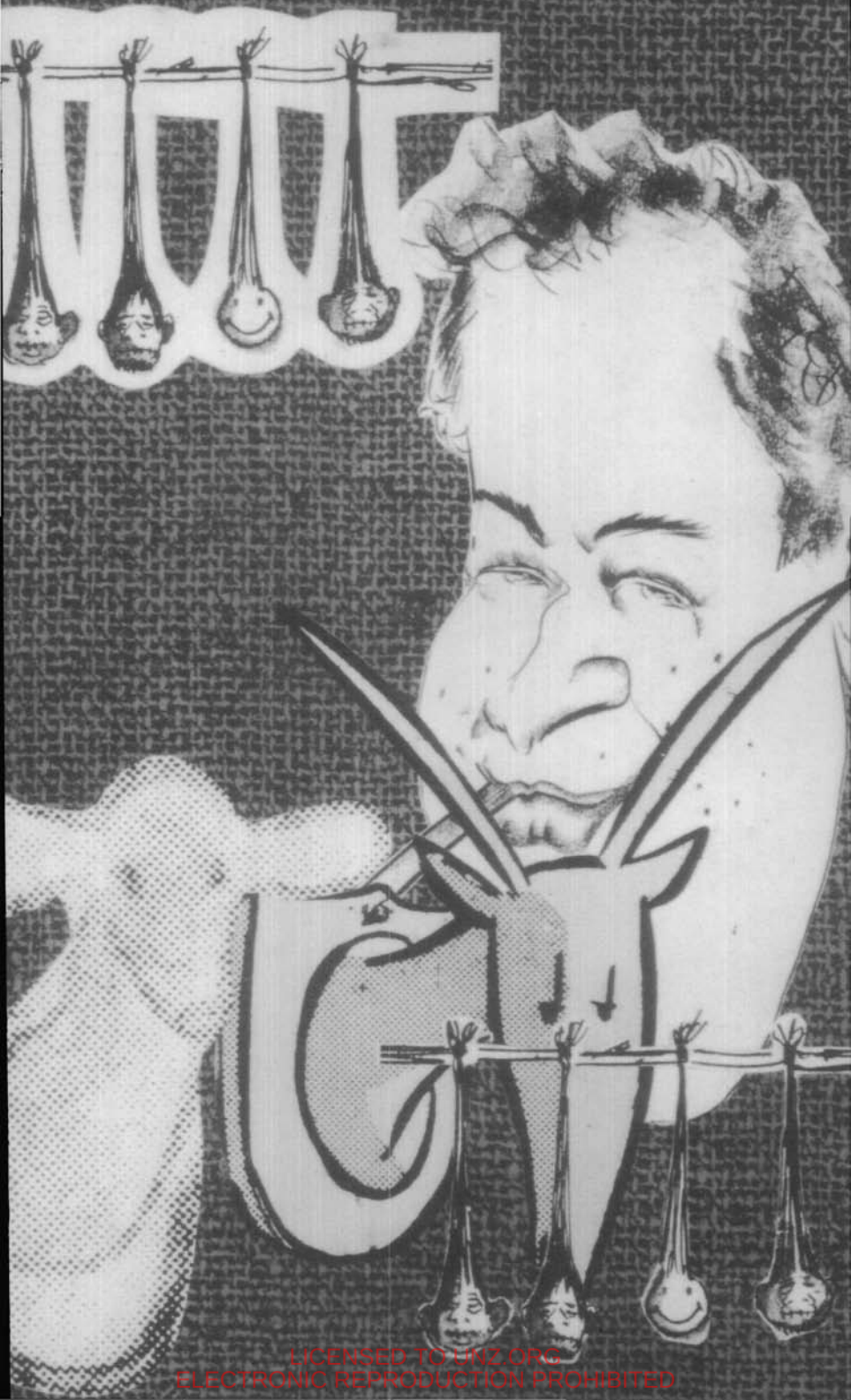
Portfolio

Untitled

Meyer Vaisman



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



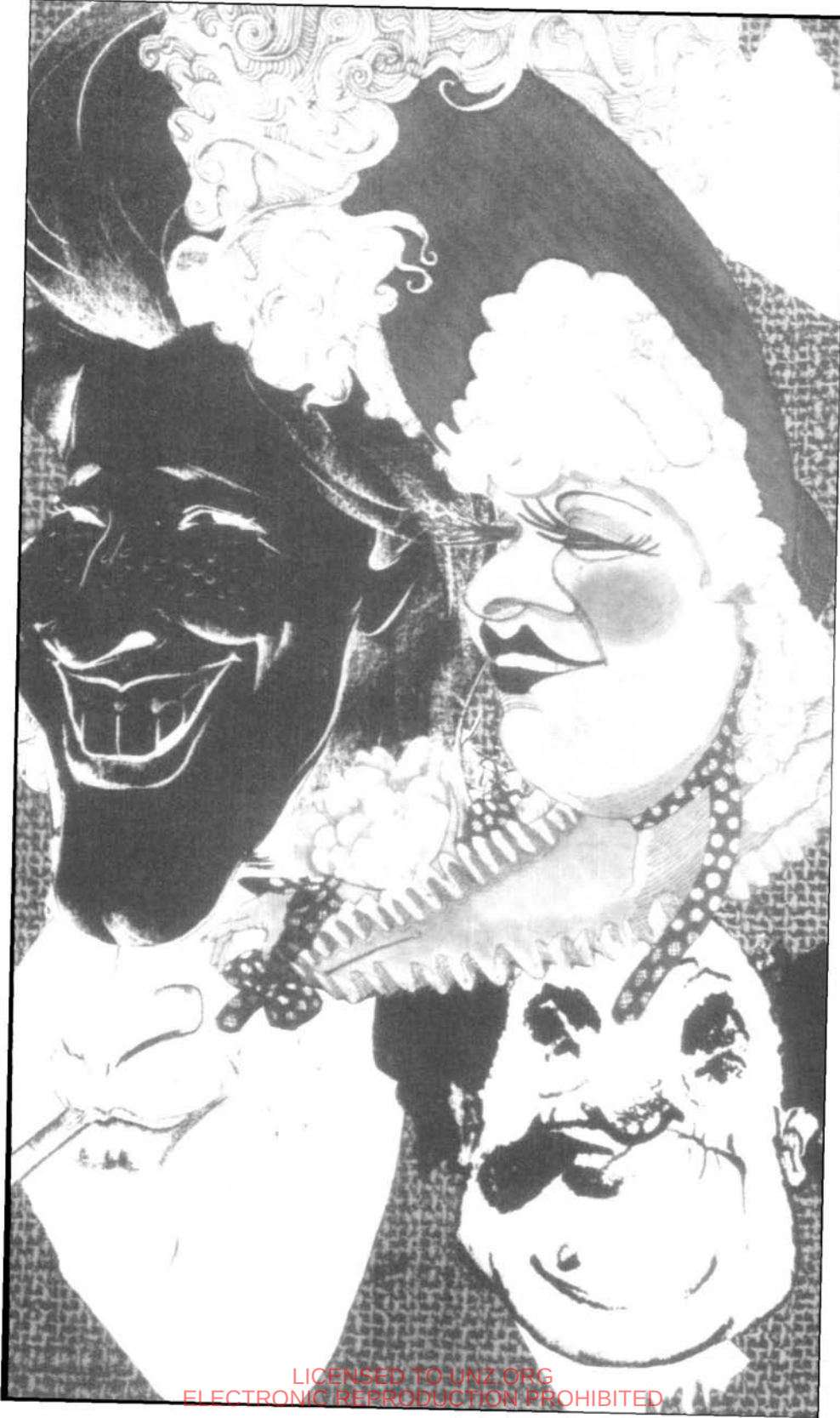
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED





LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED





LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Poems by Stephen Dunn

The Sudden Light and the Trees

Syracuse, 1969

My neighbor was a biker, a pusher, a dog
and wife beater.
In bad dreams I killed him

and once, in the consequential light of day,
I called the Humane Society
about Blue, his dog. They took her away

and I readied myself, a baseball bat
inside my door.
That night I heard his wife scream

and I couldn't help it, that pathetic
relief; her again, not me.
It would be years before I'd understand

why victims cling and forgive. I plugged in
the Sleep-Sound and it crashed
like the ocean all the way to sleep.

One afternoon I found him
on the stoop,
a pistol in his hand, waiting,

he said, for me. A sparrow had gotten in
to our common basement.
Could he have permission

to shoot it? The bullets, he explained,
might go through the floor.
I said I'd catch it, wait, give me

a few minutes and, clear-eyed, brilliantly
afraid, I trapped it
with a pillow. I remember how it felt

when I got it in my hand, and how it burst
that hand open
when I took it outside, a strength

that must have come out of hopelessness
and the sudden light
and the trees. And I remember

the way he slapped the gun against
his open palm,
kept slapping it, and wouldn't speak.

Epithalamion

for a second marriage

If you, X, take this woman, Y
and if you, Y, take this man, X,
you two who have taken each other
many times before, then this
is something to be trusted,

two separate folks not becoming halves,
as younger people do, but becoming
neither more nor less than yourselves,
separate *and* together, and if
this means a different kind of love,

as it must, if it means different
conveniences and inconveniences, as it must,
then let this *good luck*
from a friend act like grease
for what may yet be difficult, undefined,

and when the ordinary days of marriage
stretch out like prairie,
here's to the wisdom which understands
that if the heart's right
and the mind at ease with it

the prairie is a liveable place, a place
for withstanding all kinds of weather,
and here's to the little hills,
the ones that take you by surprise,
and the ones you'll need to invent.

Christopher Reid

Caretaking

for Jane and Bernard McCabe

The seven-story trees
on the jogger-thronged hill
beyond your back garden
register the breeze
with a convulsive thrill
of all their bright foliage,
a lightening of their burden
that I in turn acknowledge,
seated at your desk,
with the opulent awakening
of my own nerve-tree —
just in time to see
some strange woman beckoning,
her dog's doggy burlesque.

*

Following Maisie's
half-remembered map
of companionable smells,
obliged to stop
for the frequent delectation
of savoury breezes,
at last we reach the hill's
celebrated elevation
and there for a while we stand
with the usual kites flying,
joggers jogging,
lovers snogging,
and London itself lying
in the palm of the land.

*

Book shut, light out —
then in the gap
before real sleep
you feel the hill
looming closer,
then closer still,
a dreamlike imposture
that brings the trees'
lulling furor
right up to your ear,
and the monologue
of a distant dog
who more or less agrees
with what you have always thought.

Sandra McPherson

The Thorn-Shaver on Fifth

Falling to
his potting-mix-brown
avenue —
particular thorns —
each sliced
to an urbane demise

for a rose.
The florist's apprentice,
who might have made
a whittler in the woods,
supposes they perspire
under each spine

and finds the work worth
sitting on
the points of his bones.
On pavement.
Ready for a pageant.
For one routine

quest for the ideal.
He's already seen
the rose itself
is not ideal.
He doesn't know
he's employed by a wraith

who gets her power
putting back the prickles,
reassembling the rose,
collecting all
the tacks discomforting to shoes
and inviolate skin

to make the rooted
creating rose itself
more comfortable,
able to deflect
the poor deer's nose,
the long stems of thorns

testing the nerve of true beauty.

Donna Masini

At the Bandshell by the River

This place, too, has its own integrity:
split, ruined, abandoned
walls of chipped blue cursed
with black names, red dates, green rage
it stands here quiet in the cool salt taste of the morning.
Today the iron gates are open—
no need to belly under the rusted bars
pressing myself into dirt and weed
after a night of a thousand mirrors, taunting, humorless,
my mother in my hipbones shrieking, father my knees,
tomorrows of a grandfather who sailed out of humped
Italian caves,
coarse inland dreams
to a country where he fathered twelve children and died
far from the streets he called home.

How have I used his rough, stocky hands?
Where have I carried the few loose strands of his hair?
The fig trees he planted still ripen within me.

This morning I am loose as a river.
I laugh—at nothing—the way a baby laughs at wallpaper.
I follow the run of squirrels down the curved wood benches
in descending arcs
through the open theater once filled
with music, crowds, lovers sharing fruits from net bags,
restless children pressing bubblegum under the bench
slats,
performers stretching, sweating in the wings;
and the plane trees, the oaks, maples, lindens
the sap-smell of their sex sticky.

The sun tongues its way out of the morning fog.
Through the gash at the back of the bandshell
the glint and twist of the river draws me forward,
up the cracked stairs across the bare proscenium.

Backstage the sun cuts through the crumbling walls, falls
through the open ceiling,
over collapsed rafters and fallen staircases.
It falls on brick and rubble, broken track-lights, cigarette
 packs
pill bottles, wine bottles, old needles, a rusted washtub.
A nervous music fills the space, a rhythmic din:
birdcall, squirrel-run, mosquito, fly, pigeon, rat, sparrow,
the quick, particular movements whizzing over beams,
whistling, calling.
I stand and listen at the brink of myself
certain only of this, of this,
and the steady lisp of the river lapping.

Nighthawks

Stuart Dybek

Silhouettes

The alley became a river in the rain — a river with currents of clattering cans and a floe of cardboard. The boy would wake to the headlights of lightning spraying the walls of his small room, and lie listening to the single note of drops pinging the metal hood of a blue bulb that glowed above a garage door. Finally, he'd go to the window and look down.

The blue bulb gave the rain a bluish gleam. Rotted drainpipes gushed like dislocated fountains. Flooded tar roofs seemed to tilt, spilling waterfalls through sluices of fire-escapes.

At the mouth of the alley, a streetlight swirled, slowly disappearing down the whirlpool of a sewer. And beyond the aura of the streetlight, on a street whose name and numbers had been washed away, shadows moved aimlessly through rain. Tonight, they had their collars raised. He could catch glimpses of them passing by the mouth of the alley. Even when he couldn't see them, he could sense their presence: shapes that he'd named *silhouettes*, shadows that threw shadows, that inhabited the hourless times of night stolen from dreams when

it seemed to the boy as if he'd been summoned awake only to lie there wondering for what reason he'd been summoned. He couldn't remember when he'd become aware of their presence, or when he first thought of them as silhouettes. He had never thought of them as anything else — not ghosts, or spirits. Silhouettes were enough to haunt him.

Others had their own names for shadows. Downstairs, the Ukrainian kid who practiced the violin slept with his arms extended in the shape of a cross to ward off the dead. Across the alley, in a basement flat, a Puerto Rican girl prayed as if begging before a vigil candle flickering the picture of the Virgin on her bureau, and sometimes the smell of the coal furnace behind the grate that opened on Purgatory would fade into a faint scent of roses. There were guys who carried knives taped inside their socks to school, who still slept at the edges of their beds in order to leave room for their guardian angels. There were girls who wore mascara like a mask, who swore they'd seen Niña, the beautiful high school girl who had plunged from a roof one summer night. Niña had sneaked out that night to meet her boyfriend, Choco, a kid who played congas and had gone AWOL to see her. Choco, his conga drum strapped over his shoulder, had led her up a fire escape to the roof where he slept on an old mattress. They took angel dust which made the moon seem near enough to step onto from the roof. The girls said that on moonlit nights music would wake them—a song whose beat they all recognized, though none of them could hum back its melody—and they would see a *fantasma*, Niña, her hair flying and blouse billowing open, falling past their windows, but falling so slowly that it seemed as if it might take forever for her to hit the street.

And there were apparitions in broad daylight: the mute knife-sharpener pushing his screeching whetstone up alleys; the peddlers with clothesline whips flicking blindered horses as their wagons rumbled by, tottering under jumbled loads of uprooted cellars and toppled attics; the hunchbacked woman who walked bent from the waist as if doubled over by the weight of the lifetime's length of filthy, gray hair that streamed from her bowed head and swept the pavement before her.

They seemed part of the streets. If anyone noticed, it was only to glance away, but the boy secretly regarded them as if he were witnessing refugees from a cruel fairy tale groping their way through the ordinary world. He wondered where they disappeared to, where they slept at night, and what they dreamed.

Beside the daytime apparitions, the silhouettes seemed nearly invisible, camouflaged by night, shadows who'd broken their connections to whatever had thrown them, and now wandered free, like dreams escaped from dreamers. They emerged from viaducts on nights when viaducts exhaled fog and man-hole covers steamed. Where they stood in dripping doorways, they made the doorways darker. When they stepped into the open — shadows, but shadows no longer supported by walls or trailed along pavement — the rain, slanting through the glow of streetlights and shop signs, beaded off them like molten electricity. Oncoming headlights bent around them; flashes of lightning traced their outlines. The boy could sense them moving along the street and wondered if tonight was the night for which he'd been summoned awake, when the silhouettes would finally come up the alley, past the guardian streetlight now swirling and sinking, and assemble below his window, looking up at his face pressed against the spattered pane, their eyes and mouths opened onto darkness like the centers of guitars.

Love, it's such a night, laced with running water, irreparable, riddled with a million leaks. A night shaped like a shadow thrown by your absence. Every crack trickles, every overhang drips. The screech of nighthawks has been replaced by the splash of rain. The rain falls from the height of streetlights. Each drop contains its own blue bulb.

Laughter

I knew a girl who laughed in her sleep. She had been in the States only a year and I wondered if being foreign didn't have something to do with her laughing that way. Her eyes were a gold-flecked green more suited to cats, and ringed with the longest lashes I'd ever seen. In the right light her half-lowered lashes threw small shadows across her face. She didn't look American yet. Once, I woke her and asked what was so funny. She seemed confused and a little embarrassed, and I never asked her again.

We met at the ice cream factory where I worked the summer between high school and college. She was the first girl I was *serious* about. I felt too young to be serious—a feeling I kept secret.

She kept me a secret from her Uncle Tassos.

Her uncle was the one who had brought her over and got her the job at the ice cream factory. She worked on the bar tank line with the other, mostly foreign women sitting before a conveyor belt and packing Popsicles, Fudgesicles, Creamsicles, and Dreamsicles into freezer cartons. At the end of the day her hands were stiff with cold and her fingers stained the colors of whatever flavors had been run.

Her Uncle Tassos worked on the ore boats out of Calumet Harbor. He would be away for two-week runs, and then off work for five days straight. When he was back home the only place I would get to see her was at the factory. I was still living with my parents and began to feel ashamed for not having my own place to take her. When Uncle Tassos left with the barges again—as safely off somewhere around Petoskey as if he'd sailed for Peloponnesus—she'd sneak me up to her one-room apartment that overlooked Halsted Street.

It was an old neighborhood that Mayor Daley, despite his campaign promises, was preparing to demolish to make way for a new university. But life went on that summer as it always

had—daily newspapers printed in strange alphabets; nuts, cheeses, dried cod sold in the streets; the scent of crushed lemons from the bakery that made lemon ice; Greek music skirling from the restaurant downstairs. And once she'd let me in I wouldn't leave until morning, but sometimes, in the middle of the night, I'd have to get up and pace while the dark room filled with laughter.

Everything

A couple of months after he'd married Joan, the phone rang in the middle of the night. The phone was in the kitchen and seemed to ring through the dark apartment like an alarm. He had always been afraid of phone calls at that hour. They triggered a dread in him that something terrible had happened, and he almost believed that if he didn't answer, whatever catastrophe had occurred might be undone by morning. But this time he leaped to answer. It was better to get the news firsthand, than to listen to his new wife answer the phone and then break into sobs.

"Hello," he said, trying to sound composed.

"Yellow. Guess who."

"I know who."

"Guess what?"

"I give."

"I'm tripping on MDA."

"Oh."

" 'Ecstasy,' you know, the 'Love Drug.' Whatsamatter? You don't read *Newsweek* and keep up?"

"My subscription ran out."

"It's a body rush. Incredibly erotic. I'm so horny—climbing the walls."

"Nice of you to call and let me know."

"It heightens memory, too. Hey, I'm still a little nuts about you. Is that Joanie flushing the toilet?"

"Yes."

"She probably wants to know who's on the phone."

"Exactly right."

"That's why you're talking to me in that funny flat voice. So quiet. Not saying my name. You didn't used to be such a monosyllabic type of guy. Well, at least say something."

"Like what?"

"Like what are you wearing? Cute little seersucker pajamas?"

"Look, I should hang up."

"You're supposed to talk people down when they're trip-

ping. I could be in terrible trouble here. Remember that one time we did mushrooms? The night you said I turned into Cleopatra. You said it was the pinnacle."

"We were in college, for crissake."

"I thought I'd try something like that one more time, you know, like they shout at the end of Basie's 'April in Paris' — 'one more time!' — a tribute to the old days. I liked myself better then. Liked you better, too."

"I don't want to be the one to hang up, okay?"

"You never did. Guess what I'm wearing? Guess how I look on the other end of this telephone line. Listen, I'll rub the phone down my body. See if you can hear . . . did you hear anything?"

"No."

"Well, press your ear against the receiver. You didn't hear that? You didn't hear hair? What part of my body do you think you're talking to right now? Say something soft and breathy. Blow warm air into the phone. Pretend you're a mad breather."

"It's late. You should go to sleep."

"Come over."

"I can't."

"Baby, come see me. Tell her it's a buddy with a flat tire."

"I can't."

"Baby, oh baby, I need you so much tonight. Baby, you gotta fix my flat tire."

"It's three A.M."

"Please. Don't make me beg. Come over . . . we'll do *everything*."

"How many other people have you called besides me?"

"Only one."

Killing Time

Between job interviews, I'd wander around the Art Institute, killing time. The Art Institute was on the park side of Michigan Avenue, across the street from the towering office buildings in which the employment agencies were situated. It felt soothing to drift among the paintings. Several had begun to feel like old friends. Visiting them beat sitting over a lukewarm coffee in some greasy spoon, spending another afternoon studying not only the want ads, but the faces of the others at the counter who sat nursing their coffees as they grimly studied the want ads, too. By now, I spotted their faces everywhere. I'd become aware of an invisible army armed with want ads, pounding the pavement, knocking on doors, hoping opportunity would answer. It was an army without the consolation of camaraderie. I'd learned to recognize its unconscious salutes, its uniforms and ranks and the outposts — personnel offices, coffee shops, and stands of public phones — from which its lonely campaigns were launched. I'd been looking for a job for over a month and was beginning to feel desperate.

The Art Institute was my base of operations. Its public phones were usually empty, and its restroom was modern and clean with a full-length mirror perfect for last minute inspections before heading out on an interview.

My first couple weeks of job hunting, I'd hung out at the public library. Unlike the Art Institute, admission to the library was free. But the longer I'd gone without work, the more an old dread crept back into me: a feeling from high school, a memory of dreary Saturdays when, loaded with notecards for research papers that I was hopelessly behind on, I'd enter the public library only to end up wandering around lost, wasting the day. I remembered how, the summer before I'd started high school, my father had insisted that I spend a week at the library researching professions and the biographies of successful tycoons so that I'd have some sense of direction during my high school years and not live up to his nickname for me: The Dreamer. And I recalled how rather than doing what he'd asked, I'd only pretended to go to the library and instead had

used the money he'd given me on movies and record shops. Now his dire predictions seemed to be coming true. My money was running out; I couldn't find a job. After a week of hanging around the library, I began to recognize the same set of regulars—people who carried their possessions in bags, or wore them all at once, who seemed to be living in the library stacks. Soon, I expected them to begin winking at me, giving me secret greetings I didn't want to recognize.

The public phones in the public library were always busy. In the old restrooms fluids pooled on the cracked terrazzo, and the homeless hung around inside, smoking, sometimes washing out their clothes in the plugged sinks. Even on the brightest days I began to notice the gray, gloomy cast of the marble corridors and flights of stairs. The reading rooms, dominated by the glow of green-shaded, overhead desk lamps, seemed worn as old railroad stations. There was a smell of musty pulp, of thumbled cloth covers, of too much print. At the long reading tables I could spot the displaced and dispossessed drowsing over enormous tomes or reading aloud to themselves as if engaged in debates with the complete works of Marx and Engels, Spengler, Tolstoy, Schopenhauer, while outside the windows cooing pigeons paced back and forth along the crusted, slate ledges.

The Art Institute, by contrast, seemed flooded with light—not merely the light streaming from skylights, or the track lights focused on paintings. The paintings themselves appeared to throw an internal light the way that oaks and maples seem aflame in fall, from the inside out. My favorite painters were the impressionists. On days when it seemed as if I'd never find a job, when I was feeling desperate, I'd stand before their paintings and stare at them until it seemed I could almost step into their world, that if I closed my eyes and then opened them I'd find myself waking under the red coverlet in Van Gogh's *Bedroom At Arles*. I would open my eyes in a room of pastel light to find that one of Degas's dancers, who had been sleeping beside me, had discarded her chemise and was stepping into her morning bath. Or I would awaken already strolling without a care in and out of patches of precise shade, one of

the Sunday crowd along the river on the island of *La Grande Jette*. I wanted to be somewhere else, to be a dark blur waiting to board the Normandy train in the smoke-smudged *Saint-Lazare* station; I wanted a ticket out of my life, to be riding a train whose windows were filled with a landscape of haystacks in winter fields. It might be taking me to the beach of *Saint-Adresse* where the fishing boats have been drawn up onto the sand and a man with a telescope with his daughter by his side looks out to sea, or to *Pourville* where the wind gusts along the cliff walk and a woman opens an orange parasol while white sails hardly taller than the white-capped waves pitch on the blue-green sea.

Yet, I would always end my walk through the paintings standing before the diner in Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*. Perhaps I needed its darkness to balance the intense light of the other paintings. It was night in Hopper's painting; the diner illuminated the dark city corner with a light it didn't seem capable of throwing on its own. Three customers sat at the counter as if waiting, not for something to begin, but rather to end, and I knew how effortless it would be to open my eyes and find myself waiting there, too.

Insomnia

There is an all-night diner to which, sooner or later, insomniacs find their way. In winter, when snow drifts over curbs, they cross the trampled intersections until they come upon footprints that perfectly fit their shoes and lead them there. On nights like this in summer, the diner's lighted corner draws them to its otherwise dark neighborhood like moths.

They come from all over the city and beyond—from farm towns in Ohio, Iowa, and Indiana, crossing the unlit prairie, arriving at vacant train stations and bus terminals, then making their way towards that illuminated corner as if it's what they left home to find—a joint that asks no questions and never closes, a place to sit a while for the price of a cup of coffee.

From the size of the two nickel-plated urns, the place must serve a lot of coffee. And yet, it looks almost deserted now—only a couple, stretching out the night, at one end of the counter, and Ray, the blond counterman, bending to rinse out a cup, and a guy in a hat sitting alone with his back to the window. It never gets crowded. They file in and out—the night shift, cabbies, drunks, sometimes a cop, loners mostly—there's never telling who might step through the door.

Earlier this evening, when most of the stools were taken, a woman in heels and a summer dress stopped outside and stood peering in as if looking for someone. At least it seemed that way at first, before it became clear that she'd only stopped to fix her make-up in the reflection of the plate glass. There were mostly men at the counter, and they pretended not to watch as she stroked a comb through her hair. She seemed so unconscious of their presence that watching her would have been like spying on a woman before her own bedroom mirror. Yet, though they didn't stare, the men on the other side of the glass wondered about her; they wondered who it was she had stopped to make herself still prettier for, or if she'd just been with someone and was on her way back to someone else. When she stepped away from the window, the reflection of the lipstick she'd applied seemed to remain hovering on the glass like

the impression of a kiss. The men in the diner pretended to ignore this, too, although in its way the reflected kiss was no less miraculous than tears rolling down the cheeks of a plaster Virgin in a parish church, that crowds will line up for blocks to see. The woman stepped beyond the light of the diner and disappeared down a street of shadowy windows. After a while, the reflected kiss disappeared too — who knows where — simply dissolving into darkness, or perhaps reappearing blocks away on the glass door of a corner phone booth, where an AWOL soldier named Choco, disoriented by grief as if it were a drug, has wedged inside with his conga drum because he has nowhere else to go. He sits dazed, as if waiting for an oracle to call, and doesn't notice the kiss on the glass door among the graffitied, lipsticked initials and eyebrow-penciled numbers. And when he begins to beat the booth, his open palm becoming a bloody handprint on cracked glass, the kiss vanishes again. Perhaps the kiss crosses the city, riding the blurred window of a subway, or of a cab running red lights down a boulevard of black glass . . .

That couple, stretching out the night at the end of the counter, has been in here before. They sit side by side like lovers, and yet there's something detached enough about them so that they could pass for strangers. It might be the way they sit staring ahead rather than looking at each other, or that their hands on the countertop don't quite touch — but it's passion, not indifference, which is responsible for that. Tonight, at this late hour, they've wandered in feeling empty, a little drained by the mutual obsession that keeps them awake. The insomnia they share is the insomnia of desire. Walking here along deserted streets, they noticed this neighborhood of shadowy windows was missing a moon, and so they began to make up a moon between them: solid as a cueball; translucent and webbed with fine cracks, like bone china; cloudy, the bleached white of a bra tumbling in a drier. Now, under a fluorescence that makes her arms appear too bare and her dress shimmer from rose to salmon to shades of red for which there's no approximation, they've fallen silent. He's smoking. She

dreamily studies a matchbook from some other place where they sat like this together killing time.

And Ray, he's been working here long enough to seem like part of the decor. The white of his uniform intensifies the lighting. He keeps the coffee urns gleaming and the counter swabbed. The cocky angle of the white paper cap perched on his blond head makes him look like a kid, but he's older than people take him for; friendly, but as much a loner as anyone he serves. Working nights might seem to grant him an immunity from insomnia, but job or not, he's here like the rest of them, awake. What he does during the day is anybody's guess. He disappears behind one of those shadowed, black, upper-story windows, draws the shade, and the rising sun beats it gold. The restless sound of the traffic carries up to him from the street. Perhaps it's something other than insomnia, to lie listening to children yelling as if they've re-created light; to try to dream, but succeed only in remembering; to toss and sweat in a dirty paste of sheets, while the drone of a ball game is gradually replaced by the buzz of a fly—a fly buzzing like the empty frequencies between stations as its shadow grows enormous between the shade and windowpane. Is it insomnia for a man to wad his ears with the cotton from a pill bottle, to mask his eyes with blinders, and press a stale pillow over his head, praying for another day to burn down, so he can wake into another night?

The guy with his back to the window has been sitting there a long time nursing his mug of java. Ray, stooping to rinse out a cup, avoids looking in his direction. There's something about the way the guy's hat shadows his face, about his shoulders, hunched as if braced for another blow, about his eyes plumbing the depths of his coffee, that discourages conversation. It would be like trying to make small talk with a hit man. Besides, the guy has been mumbling to himself, his mouth moving as if chewing something too bitter to swallow. If he's thinking about women, he must be counting up all the times they've cheated on him. If he's thinking about work, he's adding up the brutal ways of saying they're taking your job: *fired*,

canned, sacked, axed, terminated. He's dwelling on the *lost* in "lost his job" — *lost* — as if the eight hours of sweat at the heart of each day could be misplaced. Why call it *lost* if it's been taken from you? *Lost* is a lie, and without such lies the streets would be crowded with assassins. But his incessant tallies, his lists of lies and grievances, his roll call of betrayals, have added up to nothing but insomnia. Insomnia is a private score he has, so far, settled only with himself; it's the time he does each night for his own betrayals, his own petty offences of failure, hard luck, desperation. And insomnia is also the threat of unnamed crimes still more menacing. After dark, he carries it beside his heart, concealed like a weapon. His back is turned, he keeps his hat brim lowered, to hide the blood-shot fire of insomnia raging in his eyes.

And finally, what about the empty water glass set on the counter before an empty stool? No tip beside it. Not that anyone but Ray paid any attention, to the person who sat there and ordered merely water. Only Ray recognized immediately that a sleepwalker had entered the diner. They wander in occasionally, and Ray has learned to recognize their habits — how they order nothing but water, and never tip. At first, Ray would serve them only what they asked for but now sometimes he buys them a coffee on the house. He isn't sure himself whether he does it out of kindness or cruelty. He'd like to think it's kindness, that if it were he who was wandering the streets asleep, he'd be grateful to anyone who tried to help. But Ray's not certain. He's heard it can be dangerous to tamper with a sleepwalker, that their souls can leave their bodies, and so Ray always braces for that moment when the steaming coffee first touches their lips and they wake.

The sleepwalker's eyes roll open. He glances around wildly as if he doesn't realize what's happened or even that he is awake. Fluorescence scalds his pupils as the coffee did his lips. The diner seems frozen in the blinding pop of a flashbulb that refuses to fade — a glare as stark as the illumination of certain dreams, brighter for being framed by night. In that paralyzing light, the sleepwalker sees the lovers at the other end of the counter, with their bleached-out, hawk-featured faces staring

straight ahead as if they're in a trance; and Ray, glancing away, caught in the act of dunking a cup under the counter as if disposing of evidence; and the guy in the shadowy hat, mumbling to no one, his eyes smoldering like cinders. Stunned as he is, the sleepwalker can feel the paralysis of the diner drawing him in as if he belongs there, too. With a half-spin, he shoves away from the counter, rises from his stool, and, leaving no tip, staggers for the door. And as he pushes out, something snaps him fully awake — maybe the night air, or the slap of a patty hitting the grill, or his soul returning to him from shadows. He stands outside the diner, within the perimeter of its aura, and stares down a street of dark windows, wondering which way he's come from, which way to go. In the diner's almost phosphorescent glow, the deserted street looks like pavement might on the moon. Above the roofs, he can see the moon the lovers at the end of the counter left behind, no longer newly minted, surrounded by the same aura as the diner, waiting faithfully like a dog for them to re-emerge. In their absence, it's gone through phases, diminishing like a stalled traffic light in the rearview mirror of a taxi. Now it's less than a crescent, less than a smudged thumbprint of mother of pearl — only a shimmer like the glint of neon on the surface of a cup of black coffee. The bitter taste of coffee still burns his tongue. He can feel his nerves jumping and his heart starting to race as if that mere sip in the diner has stoked him with the stamina of caffeine, and converted him from sleepwalking to insomnia. From somewhere in the sky above the diner, he hears the screech of a single nighthawk, and suddenly he's happy. It seems to him enough to simply be awake like that bird soaring in the darkness that sleepers have abandoned, to be walking away from the lighted corner, down the empty, silent streets they've left to him, whistling as he passes dark windows, not sure where he's going, and in no hurry to find out. It's the middle of the night, and tomorrow seems as if it's still ninety-three million miles away.

Transport

A kiss crosses the city. It rides a glass streetcar that showers blue, electric sparks along the ghost of a track—a track paved over in childhood—the line that she and her mother used to take downtown.

A kiss crosses the city, revolves through a lobby door into a rainy night, catches a cab along a boulevard of black glass, and running red lights, dissolves behind the open fans of wiper blades.

Rain spirals colorlessly out of the dark, darkens all it touches and makes it gleam.

Her kiss crosses the city, enters a subway tunnel that descends at this deserted hour like a channel through an underground world. It's timeless there, always night, as if the planet doesn't turn below the street. At the mouth of the station stands a kid who's gone AWOL and now has nowhere else to go, a young conga drummer, a *congacero*, wearing a fatigue jacket and beating his drum. He has the pigeons up past their bedtime doing the mambo. He leaves his cap of small change behind him on the pavement, and steps onto an escalator that carries him down in time to the tock of his drum. The more fervently the *congacero* drums, the deeper the escalator conveys him. He has it doing a rumba, a cha-cha-cha, a *guan-guanco*, and finally, possessed, unable to fold back upon itself, the escalator becomes a staircase flowing like quicksilver, a shimmering waterfall, an anaconda slithering through the kingdom of sleep. It will transport him deeper than sleep, deeper than dreams, than nightmares, than the nod of junkies, than comas, until he steps off onto the platform where the newly dead, their souls still shaped like their bodies, mill about in confusion, waiting to be taken to their next destination.

"Is anyone in charge here?" the *congacero* asks, the way a foreigner in a city seeks directions. Despite the mob of souls, his voice echoes as if he's called into a void. He drums now to invoke whatever spirit governs this place, a beat so compelling

that the arhythmic dead begin to sway as if they feel the accompaniment of their own hearts again.

"*Iku la tigwa un bai bai*," he chants over his drumbeat, magic words in an ancient tongue that, he's been taught, will beckon the *iku*, his dead ancestors, who might intercede for him. But the only response is the hollow silence that his drum continues to punctuate.

The loss of the woman he has descended here to find has taught him that eternity is not a presence, but an absence. His drum shapes silence into time, keeping time where there is none to keep. Time is his song and his power. Drafts from the tunnels swirl about him. In spite of the bone-deep dampness, he's begun to sweat. Sweat, impossible here as tears, patters the drumskin that he leans above with his eyes closed and drumming hands nearly invisible.

The dead file by dancing jerkily like marionettes, but he doesn't notice. They stream around him like a rush-hour crowd past a street musician, a musician so absorbed in his intricate rhythms that he's forgotten the street, and worse, has forgotten how dangerous losing one's street-sense can be. Possessed by his own drumming, he's become infused with forgetfulness. He has forgotten to drum in supplication to whatever spirit governs this place. He has forgotten to drum for the *iku*. He has forgotten to dedicate his drumming to his patron saint and guardian, Ellegua, whose necklace of sacred cowrie shells he wears under his fatigue jacket, entangled with his dogtags.

It is for Ellegua, the trickster, Master of Doors and Crossroads, that he should be drumming. Instead, he now drums solely for his lost love, the girl, who legends say, falls endlessly. One of her perfumed, black nylons is knotted around his head like a sweatband. He has refused to allow his longing for her to turn to grief. The rhythm he weaves for her has never been played before—a slap and swipe of fingertips and palms on the drumskin that evokes the sounds their sweating bodies made against one another. Its ebb and flow are like the lilt of a melody.

His drumsong is amplified by the tunnels. Its echoes return

delayed almost as if someone far off is at last responding. His conga answers its own echoes. He plays counter to them. His blurred hands pound still faster and the echoes multiply, first into a trio of sacred *bata* drummers, and then into a corps of drummers. He disperses his drum corps in search of her. Their frenzied drumming reverberates down every tunnel as if time is pulsing through the underground like blood, and finally, still dazed, she steps summoned from shadow.

He leads her back from the underground. She follows each beat of his conga as if retracing the footprints of a complicated dance step. The way they walk to the rhythm makes it look as if their hips are leading them. Death has not disfigured her beauty, and yet she wears her youthfulness like a mask. Beneath it, her eyes seem glazed, gazing inward as if completely self-absorbed in her still new, utter lack of self. She is serene and silent as he's never seen her. What's been done to you already, he wants to cry, but says nothing. Having glanced at her once, he can't look back at her again until they have returned to the world of sunlight and substance—a world where sparrows twitter in the sapling that has insisted on sprouting from the rubble of a vacant lot, and the only shadows are those of green awnings unfurled above stands of fruits and flowers.

He can't look back at her, perhaps because with each step her renunciation of death makes her more terrifyingly beautiful. Or perhaps the reason is that he doesn't dare to meet her inwardly gazing eyes for fear they will distract him from the steady, urgent domination of his beat. If his faith in his power to keep time here in the confines of eternity is shaken and his beat disrupted for even a moment, they will both be lost. Yet, he yearns to glance back over his shoulder to be sure she is following. Even in high heels, she floats so lightly that he can't hear her footfalls above the scurrying of rats.

Think only of light, little dove, he wishes to tell her. Open your memory as if you've just awakened and are slowly drawing a windowshade up on noon. When I first saw you, you were standing in a doorway, sunlight streaming through your dress, illuminating your legs, the lace petals of your underclothes.

In broad daylight I could see the shadows of your breasts as if my eyes had special power. Love, I'll slip the nightclothes from you; button by unbuttoned button you'll again become your body.

But when they reach the knot of tunnels, the confluence of steel and slime where subway track and sewers interconnect, he stops. Still drumming, he stands otherwise motionless at the junction where sink holes bottom out and dry wells, abandoned mine shafts, and caverns intersect then burrow off in all directions. The corridors are dark, a labyrinth of catacombs dropping into chasms and black canyons. His drumbeats collide with blind alleys and dead ends and the cacophony of so many ricocheting echoes overwhelms him. Suddenly, his hands are confused; he's not aware at first that they've dropped silently to his sides. The drumming continues without him — incessant, chaotic, shattering time rather than keeping it. Where is his guardian, Ellegua, Master of Crossroads, who should have been his guide? If one's patron saint is a trickster, must his blessing be a trick? He looks back to tell her he's lost, but she's no longer there behind him. And when he turns again, she is standing before him as if she has been leading them, as if she is the one who has led them here. He follows her now, his drum dragging behind him, his eyes on her back as they move off deeper into the twisting passageways. Slowly, he begins to realize that from the start he has not been the one who has done the summoning.

The kiss, blurred on the window of a subway car, rockets by them down a tunnel lit by cobalt switches. The tunnel walls are stained with seepage where the train crosses beneath the river. The conductor's voice of rattling static calls out the stops where memories disembark and passion and desire are left behind. The walls of the stations the train rushes by are graffitied with names, dates, and epitaphs. The train hurtles past the station where those who died before their time now stand patiently waiting, and past the station of those who waited too long to die. It passes the station of those who died for love, and the jammed station of those who died for lack of love. A cavalcade of shadows open their eyes an instant and reach out

to touch the kiss, to catch it on their extended fingertips—fingertips from which the prints have vanished—but the train is already gone, leaving them behind. Tonight, there's no stopping for loneliness or grief. The third rail, stretched thin, tuned like the string of a violin, seems to shoot forward. Charged with current, the third rail does not belong to the kingdom of the dead, and the kiss follows its path as if tracing a silver thread out of a maze.

A kiss emerges from a lacuna of darkness, from a channel of night once confined in a tunnel-of-love and now all that's left behind on the vacant site of a dismantled amusement park called Riverview. It crosses the city along streets named for coasts—North Shore, Lakeside, Waveland, Surf—that echo as if paved with wet tile. Above the streetlights, nighthawks wheel yiping like gulls. Beneath windowsills, the shadowy mark of the last tide fades like an impression of elastic from a bare waist.

A kiss crosses the city, floating face down like a reflection over the dreamers gazing up from a neighborhood of flooded basements and attics. Behind grated shopwindows, the mannequins are mermaids; each night they re-enter the sea as if drawing a zipper down the spine of a blue-green gown.

Her kiss crosses the city along a bridge arched like the bluest note of a saxophone, an unfinished bridge extending out like a pier into a night sea of sweet water. The beacon revolving at its end may be the dome of a squad car or the lantern of a fisherman. Trailing less shadow than a fish, her kiss slips undetected past lamps, past the flashlights of night watchmen, past gates, alarms, curfews. Not even the lips it's meant for feel the secret entry of her tongue, the scrape of her teeth, or, when she pulls away, the clinging thread of briny spit.

The River

In the rain, the alley becomes a river that winds through sleepers. Lovers listen to it flow through the dark—or so a man unable to sleep imagines. He can almost hear the river, too, although he knows that listening for it may merely be a way of occupying his mind, which should be dreaming. There may be no lovers at all. Even if there are, they may be asleep with mouths opened and backs turned to each other.

It wouldn't be the first time he's measured his life by imagining lovers. He remembers, on a morning when he was younger, standing at the window of the copy room in the high-rise office building in which he worked, and gazing across the busy avenue at the shade-drawn windows of an old hotel that still retained its elegance. Even now, he recalls the surprising rush of emotions when it occurred to him as if he could *sense* it, that, while he stood listening to the clatter of Xerox machines, lovers were waking just across the street. Perhaps he'd only imagined the lovers then as well, but at that moment their presence behind the shade-drawn windows seemed so palpable that his own life felt insubstantial beside it and he was filled with an ache for something he couldn't name but knew was missing. If they were only a daydream, then it was the kind of daydream that sometimes precedes a revelation. That was the morning he'd become certain that he wasn't right for an office job and needed to change the direction of his life while there was still time. A week later, he had quit and returned to school.

Tonight, he senses their presence again. He'd rather feel the presence of lovers, imaginary though they may be, than the absence of the woman he's separated from. If only for a night, they're a respite from the conversation he carries on without her, addressing her as if she can hear him. The lovers are silent. They lie listening to the river, and with his eyes closed he can almost hear it as they must: a high-pitched echo of sewers, a sound of darkness laced with flowing water. Every crack trickles, every overhang drips. Each drop encases its own separate note, the way each drop engulfs its own blue pearl of light.

Between wakefulness and dreaming, with his eyes closed he can see the light reflected by the falling river of rain: fogged street lamps and taillights streaked along the Outer Drive, a downtown of dimmed office buildings and glowing hotel lobbies, acetylene sparking behind blue factory windows, racks of vigil candles in the cathedral always kept open, across the street from the neon-lit bus terminal. If he were to rise and walk along the river, he'd see the shades raised and curtains parted, and find himself in a neighborhood where the dark buildings, as he's always suspected, are populated by lovers. Their silhouettes stand undressing, framed in windows, naked and enigmatic like the Lovers on a Tarot card — men and women, men and men, women and women, embracing. Lovers in the present appear superimposed over lovers from the past so that it's impossible for him to tell who is a shadow of whom. The rooms, parked cars, all the sites of their private histories glimmer as if their memories have become luminous as spirits. Even the loners are visible beneath single bulbs, appraising their desire in mirrors. The El clatters by above the roofs, its lighted windows like a strip of blue movie.

Nearly asleep, the man listens to the clatter of the El train, fading over viaducts, merging, as it grows distant, with the sounds of sporadic traffic and occasional sirens, all swept along together in the rush of the river. Listening to the river is another way of thinking about the woman. He's drifting on a flood of night-thoughts — thoughts he may try to dismiss in daylight, the way dreams are renounced and forgotten, but his restless nights have begun to inform his days. Almost dreaming, with the river flowing beside his ear, he understands why the lovers have been summoned: because the memory of the woman is becoming a shadow, one he carries like a secret, close to his heart; because beside this memory he has grown insubstantial. It draws him along behind it like a shadow — a shadow of a shadow. It had made him dark and incomprehensible even to himself. The lovers from the present have appeared, as they did when he was younger, to remind him that there is only so much time to change the direction of a life. The lovers from the past have appeared because it may already be too late,

because it may be time to release his memories so they can begin to assume a life of their own.

And what about the memory of the boy left at the window, staring out past his own spattered reflection? The boy could disappear behind a single breath fogged on the glass, then wiped away. The room has fallen asleep behind him; the bed, without his weight, is light enough to levitate. Downstairs, the Ukrainian kid, a maestro now, has begun to fiddle a nocturne to pacify the dead. Across the alley, prayers rise like an attar of roses from a basement flat. Love, rain has replaced night-hawks. It drums on the helmet of a blue light. Each drop contains its own blue bulb, and when they shatter they collect into a blue river that continues to gleam. The river, the same river sweeping them both away, is all that connects the boy and the man. It flows through the inland city, down streets it submerges, to the slick highways that bank a black sea of prairie. It empties by the piers where the rusty barges are moored along the ghostly coastline. From his window overlooking the alley that has become a river, the boy can see this. He can see the blue of that single bulb diffused in the sheen of breakwaters and distant winks of pumping stations, in the vague outlines of freighters far out on what, come morning, will be a horizon. He could glimpse the future passing, reflected in the current, if he weren't watching the streetlight slowly sinking as it swirls into the vortex of a sewer, if he weren't still waiting for the silhouettes to come for him. He doesn't realize — he won't ever know — that, like them, he's become a shadow.

Nighthawks

The moon, still cooling off from last night, back in the sky—a bulb insects can't circle. Instead, they teem around a corner streetlight, while down the block air conditioners crank, synchronized with katydids.

There's a light on in a garage where a man's legs, looking lonely, stick out from under a Dodge. What is it that's almost tender about someone tinkering with a car after midnight? The askew glare of the extension lamp propped in the open engine reminds me of how once, driving through the dark in Iowa, I saw a man and women outlined in light, kissing in a wheat field. They stood pressed against each other before the blazing bank of headlamps from a giant combine. It must have been threshing in the dark for dust and chaff hung smoldering in the beams making it seem as if the couple stood in smoke or fog.

I was speeding down a gravel-pinging road and caught only a glimpse of them, but took it as an omen to continue following the drunken divorcée I'd met earlier in a roadside bar and grill where I'd stopped for a coffee on my way back to Chicago. Divorcée was her word, the way she'd introduced herself. "I'm celebrating becoming an official, gay divorcée," she'd told me. I must have looked a little surprised because she quickly added, as if I'd gotten the wrong idea, "You know, not *gay* like with other women, but gay, like, you know, wild." We had several drinks, danced to the jukebox, and ended up in the parking lot, necking in her pickup. When I started to unbutton her blouse, she asked, "You intend to sit out here all night like teenagers or do you want to follow me home?"

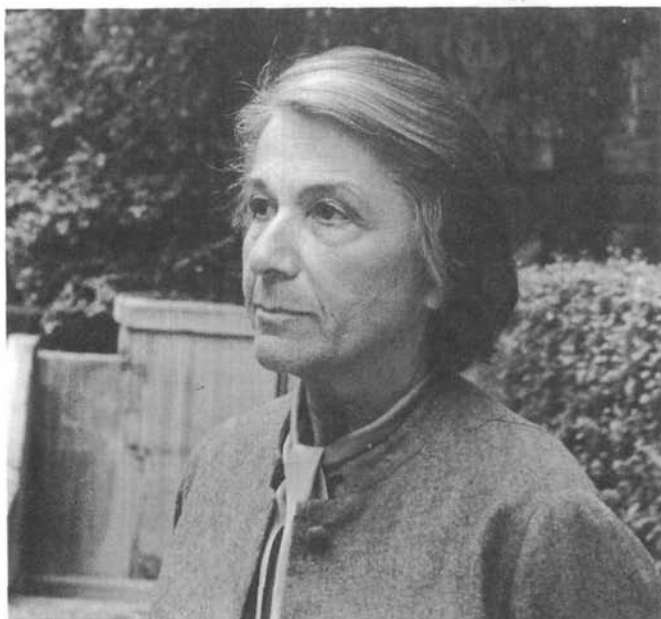
I didn't know the countryside. I followed her down highways, one veering into another, so many turns that I thought she must be taking a shortcut. I had the windows rolled down, hoping the streaming night air would clear my head. Beyond the narrow beams of my headlights, I could feel the immensity of prairie buoying us up, stretching in the dark without the limit of a horizon, and I felt suddenly lost in its vastness in a way I'd only felt before on the ocean, rocking at night in a

small boat. She kept driving faster, and I could imagine the toe of her high heel pressing down hard on the workboot-sized gas pedal of her truck. I wasn't paying attention to where she was leading me and couldn't have kept track if I'd tried. Unlit blacktop tunneled through low hanging trees. By the time we hit the dirt roads she was driving like a maniac, bouncing over railroad crossings and the humps of drainage pipes, dust swirling behind her so that her taillights were only red pin-points, and I wondered what radio station she must be listening to, wondered if she was drunker than I'd realized and she thought we were racing, or if she'd had a sudden change of heart and was trying to lose me on those backroads, and I wondered if I ought to let her.

Tonight, a lot of people are still up watching the nighthawks hunt through the streetlights. The white bars on their wings flash as they dip through the lights, then glide off against the dark trees that line the street. The trees seem more like shadows except where the inverted cones of light catch their leaves and heighten their green. And despite all the people still up, unable to let go of the evening, leaning from windows, smoking on steps or rocking on front porches, it's quiet — no small talk, or gossip, no stories, or lullabies — only the whirl of insects and the stabbing cries of birds, as if we all know we should be sleeping now, leaving the nighthawks to describe the night.

Tu ne t'aimes pas. (1)
 "Vous ne vous aimez pas." Mais comment
 ça? Comment est-ce possible? "Vous ne
 vous aimez pas? Qui n'aime pas qui?
 - Toi, bien sûr... c'était un 'vous' de politesse
~~un~~ 'vous' que j'adressais qu'à toi.
 - A moi? Moi seul? Pas à vous ^{vous} ~~à moi~~? ~~à moi~~
~~mais~~ ~~qui~~ ~~est~~ ~~un~~ ~~grand~~ ~~homme~~... ~~personnalité~~ ~~com-~~
~~plexée~~... comme toutes les autres... Alors
~~qui n'aime pas qui?~~ ~~Qui~~ ~~peut~~ ~~devoir~~ ~~aimer~~
 dans tout ça?
 - Mais ils se l'ont dit: Tu n'aimes pas
 toi, toi qui t'es montré ~~à eux~~ ~~à eux~~, toi
 qui t'es proposé, ~~tu~~ ~~as~~ ~~voulu~~ ~~être~~ ~~de~~
 service, tu t'es avancé ~~en~~ ~~vers~~ ~~eux~~... ~~sauf~~ ~~par~~
~~quoi?~~ ~~qu'est-ce~~ ~~qui~~ ~~t'a~~ ~~pris?~~ ~~tu~~ ~~as~~ ~~quand~~
~~oublié~~ ~~que~~ ~~tu~~ ~~étais~~ ~~un~~ ~~de~~ ~~nos~~ ~~incarnations~~ ~~possibles~~, ~~toutes~~
~~une~~ ~~de~~ ~~nos~~ ~~virtualités~~... et toi à coup ~~tu~~ ~~as~~ ~~été~~
~~te~~ ~~débaras~~ ~~de~~ ~~toi~~, ~~tu~~ ~~partes~~ ~~en~~ ~~avant~~ ~~comme~~
~~notre~~ ~~représentant~~, ~~et~~ ~~après~~ ~~tu~~ ~~te~~ ~~trouv~~
 'Où moi? Qui n'aime pas qui? Mais
 moi, ~~qu'est-ce~~ ~~qui~~ ~~te~~ ~~sus?~~ ~~Mais~~ ~~si~~ ~~tu~~ ~~as~~
~~moi~~, ~~je~~ ~~ne~~ ~~sais~~ ~~rien~~, ~~je~~ ~~sais~~ ~~quel~~ ~~un~~ ~~d'entre~~ ~~de~~ ~~nos~~
~~autres~~... ~~une~~ ~~possibilité~~ ~~par~~ ~~celle~~ ~~qui~~ ~~est~~ ~~la~~ ~~plus~~ ~~propre~~ ~~à~~ ~~mon~~ ~~être~~
~~C'est~~ ~~vous~~, ~~je~~ ~~aurais~~ ~~pu~~ ~~de~~ ~~toute~~ ~~notre~~ ~~et~~
~~ne~~ ~~jamais~~ ~~me~~ ~~manifest~~ ~~er~~, ~~restes~~ ~~compl~~ ~~et~~
 toute notre vie ne jamais me manifester si...

A manuscript page from Nathalie Sarraute's recent novel, Tu ne t'aimes pas.



The Art of Fiction CXV Nathalie Sarraute

Nathalie Sarraute was eighty-three when she published her first best-seller, Childhood. Unlike her previous books, it was an autobiographical work. Memories from her Russian and French childhood emerge from a word or a gesture recalled, burn brightly for a moment, and fade. Quietly the mosaic takes shape, in her compassionate regard for the parents whose early divorce divided her love.

She was born in 1900 in Ivanovo, near Moscow. Her first book, Tropisms, a collection of brief texts that appeared in 1939, marked a fresh direction in French literature. She

describes tropisms as the "interior movements that precede and prepare our words and actions, at the limits of our consciousness." They happen in an instant, and apprehending them in the rush of human interactions demands painstaking attention. Tropisms became the key to all her subsequent work.

Highly respected in France, Sarraute has been translated into twenty-four languages; her fourteen books, including eight novels, most of which are available in English, have been published by Braziller and Riverrun. Since the 1960s she has been a regular traveler, invited to universities around the world. Her husband, whom she met in law school, always accompanied her on these trips. She visits the United States every couple of years, and was last in New York in September, 1986 for the American premiere of her play, Over Nothing At All.

For the past twenty years Sarraute has gone every morning to write at the same neighborhood café in Paris. The following interview took place at her home in the 16th arrondissement, near the Musée d'Art Moderne.

INTERVIEWER

You wrote your first novel at the age of twelve, then nothing until you were thirty-two. Why?

NATHALIE SARRAUTE

My mother wrote all the time, and to parrot her I wrote a "novel" full of all the platitudes I had read in love stories at the time. I showed it to a friend of my mother who said: "Before writing novels one should learn to spell!" Psychologists would see in that episode a typical childhood trauma. Actually, I think I did not write until much later because I had nothing to say.

At the *lycée* I liked writing essays because the subjects were imposed from outside. It made me realize how pleasant it was writing well turned-out sentences in a classical style—one was on equal terms with the classics, safe in their company. Whereas in my own writing I jump into a void, without any

protection. I stumble and stammer, without anything to reassure me.

The traditional novel, with its plot and characters, et cetera, didn't interest me. I had received the shock of Proust in 1924, the revelation of a whole mental universe, and I thought that after Proust one could not go back to the Balzacian novel. Then I read Joyce, Virginia Woolf, et cetera. . . . I thought Mrs. Dalloway was a masterpiece; Joyce's interior monologue was a revelation. In fact, there was a whole literature which I thought changed all that was done before. But as I said, I myself didn't write because I had nothing to say then.

INTERVIEWER

You started writing *Tropisms* when you were thirty-two; it is a short book of twenty-four pieces, yet it took you seven years.

SARRAUTE

It took five years, which is still long. Then I spent two years trying to find a publisher for it. Finally a very good publisher, Robert Lafont, who had discovered Céline and Queneau took it. He published it in the same collection as Queneau.

INTERVIEWER

How did you arrive at the form for those first short texts?

SARRAUTE

The first one came out just how it is in the book. I felt it like that. Some of the others I worked on a lot.

INTERVIEWER

And why did you choose the name *Tropisms*?

SARRAUTE

It was a term that was in the air, it came from the sciences, from biology, botany. I thought it fit the interior movement that I wanted to show. So when I had to come up with a title in order to show it to publishers, I took that.

INTERVIEWER

How did you know what they were at the time, these tropisms? How did you know when you'd found one?

SARRAUTE

I didn't always know, I might discover it in the writing. I didn't try to define them, they just came out like that.

INTERVIEWER

The tropisms often seem to work through a poetic sensibility.

SARRAUTE

I've always thought that there is no border, no separation, between poetry and prose. Michaux, is he prose or poetry? Or Francis Ponge? It's written in prose, and yet it's poetry, because it's the sensation that is carried across by way of the language.

INTERVIEWER

With the tropisms, did you feel that it was fiction, did you wonder what to call it?

SARRAUTE

I didn't pose myself such questions, really. I knew it seemed impossible to me to write in the traditional forms. They seemed to have no access to what we experienced. If we enclosed that in characters, personalities, a plot, we were overlooking everything that our senses were perceiving, which is what interested me. One had to take hold of the instant, by enlarging it, developing it. That's what I tried to do in *Tropisms*.

INTERVIEWER

Did you sense at the time that that was the direction your work would go?

SARRAUTE

I felt that a path was opening before me, a path which

excited me. As if I'd found my own terrain, upon which I could move forward, where no one had gone prior to me. Where I was in charge.

INTERVIEWER

Were you already wondering how to use that in other contexts such as a novel?

SARRAUTE

Not at all. I thought only of writing short texts like that. I couldn't imagine it possible to write a long novel. And afterwards, it was so difficult finding these texts; each time it was like starting a new book all over again; so I told myself perhaps it would be interesting to take two semblances of characters who were entirely commonplace, as in Balzac, a miser and his daughter, and to show all the tropisms that develop inside of them. That's how I wrote *Portrait of a Man Unknown*.

INTERVIEWER

In effect, one could say that all or most tropisms we might find in people could also be found in a single person.

SARRAUTE

Absolutely. I'm convinced that everyone has it all in himself, at that level. On the exterior level of action, I don't for a minute think that Hitler is like Joan of Arc. But I think that at that deep level of tropisms, Hitler or Stalin must have experienced the same tropisms as anyone else.

INTERVIEWER

The tropisms would seem to enter the domain of the social sciences as well.

SARRAUTE

Yes. I've become more accessible, besides. My work used to be entirely closed to people. For a long time people didn't get inside there; they couldn't manage to really penetrate these books.

INTERVIEWER

Why do you think that is?

SARRAUTE

Because it's difficult. Because I plunge in directly, without giving any reference points. One doesn't know where one is, nor who is who. I speak right away of the essential things, and that's very difficult. In addition, people have the habit of looking for the framework of the traditional novel—characters, plots—and they don't find it; they're lost.

INTERVIEWER

That brings up the question of how to read these books. You do without plot, for example.

SARRAUTE

There is a plot, if you like, but it's not the usual plot. It is the plot made up of these movements between human beings. If one takes an interest in what I do, one follows a sort of movement of dramatic actions which takes place at the level of the tropisms and of the dialogue. It's a different dramatic action than that of the traditional novel.

INTERVIEWER

You've said that you prefer a relatively continuous reading of your books. But all reading is a somewhat fragmentary experience. With a traditional novel, when one picks it up again to continue reading, there are the characters and the plot to situate oneself, to discover where one has left off. In your books, do you see other ways of keeping track of where one was?

SARRAUTE

I don't know. I don't know how one reads it. I can't put myself in the reader's place, or know what he's looking for, what he sees. I have no idea. I never think of him when I'm writing. Otherwise, I'd be writing things that suit him and please him. And for years he didn't like it, he wasn't interested.

INTERVIEWER

Even after several books you weren't discouraged?

SARRAUTE

No, not at all. I was always supported, all the same, from the start. With *Portrait of a Man Unknown*, I was supported by Sartre. At the time Sartre was the only person who was doing something about literature; he had a review. My husband was also tremendously supportive, from the very start. He was a marvelous reader for me; he always encouraged me a great deal. That was a lot. It suffices to have one reader, who realizes what you want to do. So it was a great solitude, if you like, but deep down inside it wasn't solitude. Sartre was impassioned by *Portrait of a Man Unknown*. So that was very encouraging. Then when *Martereau* was done, Marcel Arland was very excited and had it published with Gallimard. He was editing the *Nouvelle Revue Française* at the time. I always had a few enthusiastic readers. When *Tropisms* came out, I received an enthusiastic letter from Max Jacob, who at the time was very admired as a poet. I can't say it was a total solitude.

INTERVIEWER

Did Sartre or others try to claim you as an existentialist?

SARRAUTE

No, not at all. He said: "I had better write a preface for it, otherwise you won't find a publisher," because he had become very famous by then. But despite his preface nobody wanted the book, and in the end a small publisher took it. It had only one little notice and was ignored. Later Sartre told me: "If you persist in writing like this you'll sacrifice your life."

INTERVIEWER

Simone de Beauvoir, while she didn't mind Sartre being surrounded by, or even having affairs with pretty actresses and secretaries, was said to be terribly jealous of women of superior intelligence who got close to him, and she broke your friendship. Is that true?

SARRAUTE

It is true that she separated us completely. But I heard that she couldn't bear Sartre having an intellectual relationship with anyone, male or female. She caused the break with Merleau-Ponty, Raymond Aron, Camus. . . . She wanted to be the only one.

But I liked Sartre very much. He had an attentiveness that denoted generosity, and I think he was warm. Simone de Beauvoir, on the other hand, was cold and distant, and as they were very close it colored his attitudes too, sometimes. He *listened* marvelously.

INTERVIEWER

That might explain why some women were seduced by him, despite his physique.

SARRAUTE

I don't know, as I certainly wasn't one of them! I liked him as a friend, but found him physically one of the most repulsive men I had ever seen—it was terrible! The physical aspect of a man was always very important to me.

INTERVIEWER

What about your own feminism?

SARRAUTE

I militated for the women's vote in 1935. I have always been a feminist in so far as I want equal rights for women. But the idea of "women's writing" shocks me. I think that in art we are androgynous. Our brains are not different, but until now women were less educated, so they produced fewer works of art. People always compare women to each other. I was once asked, at a conference, what was the similarity between Marguerite Yourcenar and Marguerite Duras. I said that there was an enormous similarity: they were both called Marguerite! Otherwise there is not an iota of connection between them.

INTERVIEWER

Some people have seen a feminist bias in your work.

SARRAUTE

Imagine! But I hardly ever think of gender when I write about my characters. I often prefer *he* to *she* because *he* is neutral but *she* is only female. In *The Planetarium* there is an old woman who is anxious because a door-handle has been badly put on her door. Well, a young man wrote to me and that "this old lady is me!" He explained that he had just been married and moved to a new apartment, and that he was just as worked-up about some details as my character. You can imagine how pleased I was!

Some time ago I received a doctoral thesis whose subject was woman's condition in my novels! I was flabbergasted! But if I had wanted to discuss woman's condition I wouldn't have written the sort of books I have. Woman's condition is the last thing on my mind when I write.

INTERVIEWER

To return to tropisms, do you feel there are other writers who have found certain lessons in that domain?

SARRAUTE

I don't feel I have any imitators. I think it's a domain that is too much my own.

INTERVIEWER

Would it be possible to use the tropisms in a more traditional novel?

SARRAUTE

I don't see how. What interest would there be? Because in a more traditional novel, one shows characters with personality traits, while the tropisms are entirely minute things that take place in a few instants inside of anybody at all. What could that bring to the description of a character?

INTERVIEWER

As if at the moment of the tropisms, the character vanishes.

SARRAUTE

He disintegrates before the extraordinary complexity of the tropisms inside of him.

INTERVIEWER

Which is what happens in *Martereau*.

SARRAUTE

Martereau disintegrates. And in *Portrait of a Man Unknown*, the old man, the father, becomes so complex that the one who's looking to see inside of him abandons his quest, and at that moment we end up with a character out of the traditional novel, who ruins everything. In *Martereau* it's the character out of the traditional novel who disintegrates at the end.

INTERVIEWER

Yet in *The Planetarium*, it seems that more than ever you're using traditional characters.

SARRAUTE

On purpose. Since they are semblances it's called *The Planetarium*, and is made up of false stars, in imitation of the real sky. We are always for each other a star like those we see in a planetarium, diminished, reduced. So, they see each other as characters, but behind these characters that they see, that they name, there is the whole infinite world of the tropisms. which I tried to show in there.

INTERVIEWER

Considering the interiority of your writing, has it sometimes been difficult to remain at such depths?

SARRAUTE

No, what is difficult is being on the surface. One gets bored

there. There are a lot of great and admirable models who block your way. And once I rise to the surface, to do something on the surface, it's easy, but it's very tedious and disappointing.

INTERVIEWER

You've said that with the novels you wrote the first draft directly from beginning to end.

SARRAUTE

At first. I always have to make a beginning that's entirely finished, the first few pages must be fixed in place. Like a springboard that I take off from, I don't rework it any further. I work on it a lot, and then it's finished. But after that, I wrote from one end to the other. I used to work like that, not now. I wrote from one end to the other, in a form that was sometimes a bit rough; I found the general movements, and then I rewrote the whole thing. For a while now, though, I've been afraid of waiting two or three years like that before starting over. So, I write gradually, I finish each passage as I go along. I changed my system about six years ago, since *The Use of Speech* and *Childhood*.

INTERVIEWER

In *Martereau* the narrator speaks of the importance of words, of what they hide. For Martereau, who is rather a traditional novelistic character, words are "hard and solid objects, of a single flow." One would say that in your books you feel a certain seduction of words.

SARRAUTE

Yes, it's words that interest me. Inevitably. It's the very substance of my work. As a painter is interested in color and form.

INTERVIEWER

Some say the most important problem in the novel is time. In your book of essays, *The Age of Suspicion*, you said that "the time of the tropisms was no longer that of real life but

of an immeasurably expanded present.” In the novels, then, time is surely complicated.

SARRAUTE

There are always instants. It takes place in the present finally. I’m concerned with these interior movements; I’m not concerned with time.

INTERVIEWER

Is that because you often do without plot?

SARRAUTE

Completely. It has to do with a dramatic development of these interior movements—that’s the time. There is no exterior reference.

INTERVIEWER

So then it’s a sort of freedom from time.

SARRAUTE

Time is absent, if you like.

INTERVIEWER

How was it you realized you could do without plot in the first place?

SARRAUTE

The question never posed itself for me. Given what I was interested in, plot didn’t enter into it. I was involved as with a poem; one writes a poem and isn’t concerned with such matters as plot. It was a free territory; there were no pre-established categories that I was obliged to enter into.

INTERVIEWER

In effect there are quite a few correspondences with poetry in your work.

SARRAUTE

I hope so. There was a book written about *Between Life and*

Death by an Australian who called it a “poetry of discourse.” He called it a novelistic poetry. Not a poetic novel, because that’s been done.

INTERVIEWER

Have you read a lot of poetry?

SARRAUTE

Not especially. I’ve read some. You know, outside reading has not played a big role in my work.

INTERVIEWER

Well, what sort of reading was important for you?

SARRAUTE

What really turned me around was reading Proust—it was a revelation of a whole world—and reading Joyce too. The interior monologue of Joyce. They’re things without which I wouldn’t have written as I do. We always start from our predecessors. If I’d written in the eighteenth century, I wouldn’t have written like that. There had to be writers like that before me who opened up such realms.

INTERVIEWER

Were you fairly young when you read them?

SARRAUTE

Yes. I read Proust when I was twenty-four, and Joyce at about twenty-six.

INTERVIEWER

In one of the essays you quote Katherine Mansfield’s phrase, “this terrible desire to establish contact.” But once a person takes off on a more experimental path, like yours for example, what becomes of that need? Were you yourself thinking along such lines?

SARRAUTE

No; when I work I never ever define from the outside; I don’t

qualify what I'm doing. I'm looking to see what is felt, what we feel. I don't know what it is, and that's why it interests me: precisely because I don't know exactly what it is. Those were theoretical essays; they have nothing to do with my work when I write. I don't put myself at that distance, I'm entirely inside.

INTERVIEWER

In the essay "The Age of Suspicion," you said that the novel "has become the place of the reciprocal mistrust" of the reader and the writer. Do you think that with the contemporary novel that mistrust has gotten deeper, more serious?

SARRAUTE

Listen, it's an entirely personal question. I'm not terribly interested—except when I'm reading Agatha Christie or novels that carry me away—in the personalities of the characters or in the plot. When I see a novel written in that form, it might amuse me, it can be slices of life or descriptions of manners, but I can't say that it interests me as a writer. There are those who like that, obviously; people do continue to write in that way.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel, for example, that the contemporary novel has become more conservative?

SARRAUTE

There was a period when we fell back, in a state of joy, to the tradition. There was a strong academic tendency, in the theater as well, and everywhere. And I think all the same we're getting out of that once again. The admiration for academism is declining.

INTERVIEWER

If there is such a thing as an evolution of the novel, do you see it as a one-way street?

SARRAUTE

I'm not a critic, you know. I only read what interests me,

what passes my way. I don't have any opinion on the current evolution of literature. I think that the writers who were grouped under the term *nouveau roman* have all continued to write, each in his way, works which have remained alive for the most part.

INTERVIEWER

On various occasions, especially in your essay on Flaubert, you've spoken about dispensing with the old accessories such as plot and characters. But are those old accessories so useless as that; are there no truths to be reached with them?

SARRAUTE

One reaches certain truths, but truths that are already known. At a level that's already known. One can describe the Soviet reality in Tolstoy's manner, but one will never manage to penetrate it further than Tolstoy did with the aristocratic society that he described. It will remain at the same level of the psyche as Anna Karenina or Prince Bolkonsky if you use the form that Tolstoy used. If you employ the form of Dostoyevski, you will arrive at another level, which will always be Dostoyevski's level, whatever the society you describe. That's my idea. If you want to penetrate further, you must abandon both of them and go look for something else. Form and content are the same thing. If you take a certain form, you attain a certain content with that form, not any other.

INTERVIEWER

But even so, the form is something you've discovered each time.

SARRAUTE

Each time it has to find its form. It's the sensation that impels the form.

INTERVIEWER

In your essay "Conversation and Sub-conversation" you speak of certain ideas that Virginia Woolf and others had

about the psychological novel, and you suggest that perhaps it hasn't yielded as much as they had hoped at the time.

SARRAUTE

That was meant ironically. I agreed with her. I don't really like the word "psychological," which has been used a lot, because that makes one think of traditional psychology, the analysis of feelings. But I would say that the universe of the psyche is limitless, it's infinite. So, each writer can find there what he would like. It's a universe as immense as we all are, and there are writers yet who are going to discover huge areas of the life of the psyche which we haven't brought to light.

INTERVIEWER

In the same essay you also speak of the American example, as a reason to look beyond the psychological. Who were you thinking of, besides Faulkner?

SARRAUTE

The behaviorists. They were completely against that. Steinbeck, Caldwell, that wasn't psychological at all. It was because of them that psychology was despised. It had a big influence, besides, on people like Camus, with *The Stranger*. It was fashionable at the time to say that there was no conscience, that it held no interest.

INTERVIEWER

In "Conversation and Sub-conversation," you particularly discuss the problem of how to write dialogues now, so that the sub-conversation may be heard. How did you arrive at your manner of reaching all those levels at once, in the way you write dialogue? Was it by a lot of experimenting?

SARRAUTE

No; that comes uniquely from intuition, it represents a big job of searching in order to reconstitute all these interior movements. To relive it. To expand it, to show it in slow mo-

tion. Because it is very fleeting. It gets erased very quickly. And it's very difficult to get a hold of.

INTERVIEWER

You've written that the traditional methods of writing dialogue couldn't work anymore.

SARRAUTE

Not for me. Because I would have to put myself at too much of a distance from the consciousness in which I dwell. I'm immersed right inside, and I try to execute the interior movements that are produced in that consciousness. And if I say, "said Henri" or "responded Jean," I become someone who is showing the character from outside.

INTERVIEWER

One of the things that marks your writing is the punctuation, which you work very carefully.

SARRAUTE

In the last few books there are a lot of ellipses; there were less of them before. I find that they prevent one from reading these movements, which are very quick and suspended, without breathing. There is need for a certain breathing when one reads it, and the ellipses create this breathing. They help in the rhythm of the sentence. It gives the sentence more flexibility.

INTERVIEWER

Let's talk about your theater work. Why did you start writing plays?

SARRAUTE

It was simply a request by the radio in Stuttgart. A young German, Werner Spiess, came to see me for the radio in Stuttgart. He asked me to write a radio play. That was in 1964. He wanted something new, in a style that wouldn't be like the

Although she always remained silent and apart, her head bowed modestly, counting her stitches under her breath, "one knit, purl three, now then an entire row knit," so feminine, so unobtrusive ("don't mind me, I'm quite all right like this, I don't want anything for myself"), they constantly sensed, as though in a tender spot on their own flesh, her presence.

Invariably concentrated on her, as though fascinated, they observed with terror every word, the slightest intonation, the subtlest shading, every gesture, every look; they walked on their toes, turning round at the slightest noise, for they knew that there were mysterious places everywhere, dangerous places that they should not bump into, not graze, otherwise, at the slightest contact, as in one of Hoffmann's tales, little bells, thousands of little bells with a clear tinkle, like her maiden's voice—would start ringing.

But at times, in spite of all these precautions, all this effort, when they saw her sitting silent in the lamplight, looking like some frail, gentle

An example of a tropism, the form which distinguished Sarraute's early fiction.

From Tropisms, by Nathalie Sarraute. (Translated by Maria Jolas. Text courtesy George Braziller, Inc.)

underseas plant, entirely lined with mobile suckers, they felt themselves slip and fall with all their weight, crushing everything beneath them: then there issued from them stupid jokes, sneers, frightful stories of cannibals, all this issued from them and burst out without their being able to check it. And she coiled up gently—oh! it was too awful!—dreaming of her little room, of her beloved refuge to which she would soon go and kneel down on her bedside rug, in her batiste gown gathered at the neck, so childlike, so pure, a little Thérèse de Lisieux, Saint Catherine, Saint Blandina . . . and holding tightly the little gold chain about her neck, she would pray for their sins.

Sometimes, too, when everything went very well, when she curled up all excited, sensing that they were about to embark on one of those questions she so loved, when they were sincerely, seriously discussed, they would slip away, pirouetting like clowns, their faces stretched in idiotic, horrible grins.

usual style; it didn't matter if it were difficult even. I started by refusing. He returned a second time, and I refused again. And then I thought about it one day, and I told myself that perhaps all the same I could write a radio play, that it would be entirely a matter of the dialogue. I hadn't thought I would be able to do it, because for me the dialogues are prepared by the sub-conversation, the pre-dialogue. The dialogue only skims the surface of the sub-conversation. So, I decided *everything* will be in the dialogue, what is in the pre-dialogue will be in the dialogue. They later said my plays, in relation to my novels, were like a glove turned inside out. Everything that is inside, is now on the outside.

INTERVIEWER

Which play was that?

SARRAUTE

First it was *Silence*, then *The Lie*, then the four other plays. They were always performed first for foreign radio.

INTERVIEWER

Is that why you put hardly any directions in the text, because they were written for the radio?

SARRAUTE

That's right, because they're not written for the stage. There's only one play where I was thinking of the stage; that was *It is There*. And still, not a lot. Above all, I hear the conversations and the voices, and I don't see at all the theatrical space, the actors. All that is the job of the director. Which is a very interesting job, because everything remains to be done.

INTERVIEWER

Have you attended rehearsals much?

SARRAUTE

Yes, I've attended rehearsals. First, with Jean-Louis Barrault, then with Claude Regy, then with Simone Benmussa. I don't

have a lot to say, except for the intonations. But not about the actors' movements; that's the director's job.

INTERVIEWER

Were all the plays requests like the first one?

SARRAUTE

It was always for the radio, always the same person who asked me. Then, after the radio in Stuttgart didn't do difficult plays anymore, it was the radio in Cologne. And French radio too. Each time after having finished a novel, I rather liked writing a radio play. It distracted me, it gave me a bit of a change.

INTERVIEWER

Has the experience of writing changed much for you since you were young? Do you have different habits?

SARRAUTE

I don't feel that it's changed. I think we always have the same difficulties with each new book; there is no acquiring of experience. Each new book is entirely another realm in which one must try to find its form and its sensations, and the difficulties are the same as at the start. I see no progression. There is no technical experience gathered for me.

INTERVIEWER

Was writing much different for you when your children were young?

SARRAUTE

No. I started to write when the third daughter wasn't yet born, the two others were little; that played no role. I always had enough time for myself. You know, I don't believe that women of the bourgeoisie can pretend they can't write because they have children. That's an absurdity. Claudel was the French ambassador in Washington and wrote an immense body of work, and he never ceased to be ambassador and all that that represents. So, when you've got someone to take care

of the children, and later when they go to school, it's impossible not to find two or three hours in the day to work. It's *very* different for a working-class woman or for a working-class man; it's the same problem. Not entirely the same, because the woman has still more work to do than the man. But there I understand completely that it's impossible to find time to oneself to write. One can't speak like that of women from the intellectual milieu, which is always a bourgeois milieu. Especially before — then one found whatever one wanted for taking care of the children. There was no problem as to that. Now it's become more difficult.

INTERVIEWER

Considering then the interior quality of your writing, do you see that the fact of being a woman gave you any special access to such a state? As if that predisposed you toward the interior rather than out towards action in the world.

SARRAUTE

No, I don't think so at all. I don't think that Proust or Henry James or even James Joyce were turned elsewhere than toward the inside. It's a question of the writer's temperament.

INTERVIEWER

Do you see any sort of difference between women's writing and that of men?

SARRAUTE

No, I don't see any. I don't feel that Emily Brontë's work is an example of woman's writing, among women who truly wrote well. I don't see the difference. One says first of all, "That's what it is to be a woman," and then afterwards one decides that is feminine. Henry James is always in the minute details, in his lacework. Or Proust, much more still than most women. I think that if women like Emily Brontë wanted to keep a pseudonym, they were entirely right. One cannot find a manner of writing upon which it would be possible to stick the label of feminine or masculine; it's writing pure and sim-

ple, an admirable writing, that's all. There are *subjects* in writing that are very feminine, which are lived, and there are women who write on feminine subjects like maternity; that's completely different.

INTERVIEWER

To change the subject, let's talk about cigarettes. Have you always been a smoker?

SARRAUTE

Alas! I shouldn't smoke, but I don't smoke a lot. Six or seven cigarettes a day. That's still too much. I have a very bad habit. So, in order not to smoke, I've taken to holding the cigarette in my mouth while I work. I don't light it. That gives me the same effect. Because I forget. I feel something and I forget if it's lit. Since I smoke very weak cigarettes, and I don't swallow the smoke, I have just as much the impression of smoking even if it's not for real.

INTERVIEWER

As if it enters into the game, in effect.

SARRAUTE

That's right. It's a gesture, something one feels.

INTERVIEWER

You have written all your books, from the first to the latest in the same café, where you work every day. Why not at home?

SARRAUTE

At first because the house was full of children; my husband was a lawyer and received his clients here, so I couldn't work. Going to a café is like traveling—you get out of your own environment and its distractions. Writing is difficult; it is like jumping into the void. One tries to avoid it by any means—looking for a lost piece of paper, making a cup of tea, anything. In a café you jump in. Nobody disturbs me there and I don't hear the conversations. I had the same set-up in the

country, until one day they installed a jukebox in the café where I worked, and that *does* stop you from thinking. So I arranged a cowshed across the courtyard, and every morning I go there and work.

INTERVIEWER

You were blessed with a happy marriage for sixty years. Do you think it helped your writing by giving you a secure emotional background?

SARRAUTE

I don't use words like "Happiness" or "Love," with capital letters. I can only say that there was a great understanding between us, and that I received complete support from him about literature.

INTERVIEWER

You have also been blessed with vigorous health and a long life. Do you ever think about death?

SARRAUTE

At my age if you don't think about death, what do you think about?

INTERVIEWER

Do you believe in an afterlife?

SARRAUTE

I have never been a believer. For me death is the end. But one can't know. I do think that those who have faith, who go towards God, are lucky.

INTERVIEWER

Could we speak about the conception of some of your books? Did *The Golden Fruits*, for example, come out of an experience with the literary world?

SARRAUTE

Not at all. I take no part in the literary world; I've never gone to the literary cocktail parties. That book has to do with an inner experience. It has to do with a kind of terrorism around a work of art that is lauded to the skies and which we cannot approach. Where there is a sort of curtain of stipulated opinions that separates you from that work. Either we adore it or else we detest it; it's impossible to come near it, because above all in the Parisian milieu, even without going to the cocktail parties, even in the press, there reigns a kind of terrorism of general adulation, and you don't have the right to have a contrary opinion, to draw near it. And then it falls, and at that moment you no longer have the right to say that it's good. That's what I wanted to show—this life of a work of art. And this work of art, what is it? I'd have to draw near it, but that's impossible. And then all that we find there, all that we look for in a book, has nothing to do with its literary value.

INTERVIEWER

There is often a multitude of voices in that book.

SARRAUTE

It's like that in most of my books that come later. There are all these voices without our needing to take an interest in the characters that speak them. It doesn't much matter.

INTERVIEWER

Have there been processes that repeat themselves, either in the conception or in the elaboration of the novels?

SARRAUTE

Each time it didn't interest me to continue doing the same thing. So, I would try to extend my domain to areas that were always at the same level of these interior movements, to go into regions where I hadn't yet gone.

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever been surprised by the fate of one of your books?

SARRAUTE

No. I was more pessimistic at the start. I really thought that it would not be at all understood.

INTERVIEWER

You've said that the *nouveau roman* movement helped you to get read. But did the idea of belonging to a so-called movement constrain you as well?

SARRAUTE

No. And none of those who belonged, who were classed in this movement, as you've been able to see, have written things that resemble each other—whatever it may be. They've remained completely different from each other, and have continued each one in his own path.

INTERVIEWER

Your essays were among the first to speak of concerns common to the group. Have you ever felt any sort of responsibility to this movement?

SARRAUTE

Not at all. I had reflected upon these questions about the novel before the others, because the others were twenty years younger than me. I haven't changed my way of thinking since my first books, I haven't budged. I could repeat exactly the same things I said when I wrote "The Age of Suspicion." It is a deep conviction that the forms of the novel must change, that it's necessary that there be a continual transformation of the forms, in all the arts—in painting, in music, in poetry, and in the novel. That we cannot return to the forms of the nineteenth century and set another society in them, it doesn't matter which. So, that interested Alain Robbe-Grillet—he's the

one who did a lot to launch the *nouveau roman*. He was working at Les Éditions de Minuit; he wanted to republish *Tropisms*, which had been out of print. It came out at the same time as *Jealousy*, and at that moment in *Le Monde* a critic had written, "That is what we can call the *nouveau roman*," though he detested it. It was a name that suited Robbe-Grillet quite well; he said, "That's magnificent, it's what we need." He wanted to launch a movement. Me, I'm incapable of launching a movement. I've always been very solitary.

INTERVIEWER

Were there ever any meetings of the group?

SARRAUTE

Never. Nor discussions. It had nothing in common with the Surrealists, where there was a group, a leader—André Breton, nothing of the kind. We never saw each other.

INTERVIEWER

How did Robbe-Grillet find all the writers to bring them together as a movement?

SARRAUTE

It was Les Éditions de Minuit. Robbe-Grillet found Michel Butor, who had written *Passage de Milan*, which they published. He found Claude Simon. Robert Pinget as well. Robbe-Grillet and Jérôme Lindon, who is the director of Les Éditions de Minuit, worked together. Like that they formed a sort of group.

INTERVIEWER

Have there been other experimental literary movements that have interested you?

SARRAUTE

No, I passed entirely beside that. The Surrealist movement, for example, might have interested me, but it didn't at all.

INTERVIEWER

What about the Oulipo movement in the 1960s, which included Georges Perec, Raymond Queneau, Italo Calvino?

SARRAUTE

I liked what Queneau was doing a lot. As I mentioned, my first book, *Tropisms*, appeared in the same collection as his book, *The Bark Tree*, with the publisher Robert Denoël, and I quite liked *The Bark Tree*.

INTERVIEWER

Which of your books do you prefer?

SARRAUTE

That's very difficult to say. I don't reread them. And sometimes I tell myself, "But it seems to me I've already done something like that," and I can't recall where.

INTERVIEWER

Has one of the books satisfied you more than the others?

SARRAUTE

It's all very difficult. There are always doubts, in regard to what I wanted to do.

INTERVIEWER

Even the doubts, have they played a constructive role sometimes?

SARRAUTE

I don't know. I think it's very painful, and that it's better not to have any doubts. I envy those who don't have any; I envy them a lot. They are happy people.

INTERVIEWER

In *Do You Hear Them?*, it seems that every movement starts from a central balance: on one side the two friends and the pre-Colombian stone that they're admiring, and on the other

side the children upstairs and their laughter. What impelled you to explore this dynamism?

SARRAUTE

I've always been interested by the relation between a work of art, the desire to communicate, and what the work of art brings you. Also, the relation between people who love each other a great deal. I thought it was an amusing construction, I don't know. Each time there is a point of departure, but you know it's hardly conscious. It comes and one doesn't know how, nor why.

INTERVIEWER

We are far from autobiography in your work; so readers and critics end up by being curious about your life. You give little importance to all that. Why, do you think, do so many serious writers insist on not writing autobiography in their books?

SARRAUTE

I think that in every book we put a lot of experience that we have ourselves lived more or less, or imagined ourselves, that there is not a single book that doesn't contain an experience. Even with Kafka. Kafka didn't live *The Trial*, but there is a whole universe in which he lived, which was close to him and which he translated in *The Trial*, or *The Castle*. It's a transposition; it's a metaphor for something that he felt very strongly, and that we all feel as well.

INTERVIEWER

But it seems sometimes there is a sort of mistrust of autobiography.

SARRAUTE

When it's a real autobiography. That is, one wants to display everything one has felt, how one has been. There is always a *mise en scène*, a desire to show oneself in a certain light. We are so complex and we have so many facets, that what interests me in an autobiography is what the author wants me to see.



Nathalie Sarraute as a child, in Ukrainian costume.

He wants me to see him like that. That's what amuses me. And it's always false. I don't at all like Freud and I detest psychoanalysis, but one of Freud's statements I have always found very interesting, and true, is that all autobiographies are false. Obviously, because I can do an autobiography that will show a saint, a being who is absolutely idyllic, and I could do another that will show a demon, and it will all be true. Because it's all mixed together. And in addition, one can't even attain all that. When I wrote *Childhood*, I stopped at the age of twelve, precisely because it's still an innocent period in which

things are not clear and in which I tried to recover certain moments, certain impressions and sensations.

INTERVIEWER

What are you working on now?

SARRAUTE

It's something in a form that I've never used, and I don't know what it will be. I've got about two-thirds of the book now, but I'm not in so much of a hurry to finish it. I don't know what I'll do after it.

INTERVIEWER

Your book *The Use of Speech* recalls your first book *Tropisms*. Again there are brief texts completely separate from each other, though here you look at certain things around a specific word.

SARRAUTE

As it's called *The Use of Speech*, it always starts off from the spoken word. The word falls there like a stone and makes eddies.

INTERVIEWER

Was it conceived as a book from the start?

SARRAUTE

It was conceived in advance that each of its texts would center around a word, whereas *Tropisms* was not conceived in advance. There I'd written the texts one after the other, without really knowing what I was in the process of doing.

INTERVIEWER

Your most recent book, *Childhood*, is altogether different once again. Why did you use the form of dialogue to recall these memories?

SARRAUTE

That came about naturally, because I told myself it's not possible for you to write that. Until that point, I'd always written fiction. I had a great freedom; I invented situations in which I placed, under a certain light, things that interested me. And in *Childhood* I would be bound to something that was fixed, that was already past. It was the contrary of everything I'd done. So I told myself, You cannot do that. I noted down this dialogue, and it served me for the start of my book. After that, all through the book I had this second conscience, which was a double of myself, and which controls what I'm doing, which helps me advance.

INTERVIEWER

The memories in the book often work like tropisms.

SARRAUTE

I chose memories where there were tropisms, as much as possible. That's what interested me. It gives movement to the form.

—Jason Weiss
Shusha Guppy

Suzanne Gardinier

Dear Sam, Taken by the Adoption Agency

Are you listening? Mommy takes care of you.
She's writing this letter with her pen dipped
in the milk her nipples won't stop streaming

so as you read you won't be hungry. She's in
the claws that bite your mittens to
your parka sleeves, she's in the pins

that stab your diaper flaps together. Why
did you make her bloat and bleed like a pig
for this? For nothing? Never mind.

She's in your navel. Do you remember?
She'll keep your old apartment vacant
forever, she can't help it, she hopes

your new mother slits you like a chicken
or guides you to the socket and forces in
your tongue. She would rather you

not be than not be hers. Who left whom?
Whose shoulder blades are you wearing?
To please the authorities she laughs

like sandpaper on steel, to assure them
she's scraped her walls clean of you. But
you know better, deserter. She hasn't forgotten.

Mark Rudman

The Nowhere Water

We ate alone in the immense dining room.
My mother got me to eat each night
by saying any meat was buffalo meat.
The desert had the silence of one who waits.
Cool water, clear water—she sang.
Her voice soothes my deepest blood
as I listen to her sing it over and over;
she knew just how to prolong

cool—clear—wa-ter—.
The desert was vast and empty.
Water nowhere, neither cool nor clear.
My one friend lived in a trailer in a dust bowl.
I'd wander off alone and once
got far enough away to where
the bleaching neon of the strip
dwindled to tinsel.

Everywhere we went men were after her.
One clear night we were walking home
hand in hand in the dark.
No moon, but the road was lit
by gas station globes
and not too distant hotels,
when a silver-haired man
behind the red wheel of

a white Caddy convertible
stalked alongside
and offered us a ride.
She gripped my hand; panic
coursed through us, our spines rigid.
“Don’t look, just keep walking.”
Soon she would be married again.
What a waste of beauty—and all on my account.

There is no love like the love
of sons for mothers.
And the seedy silver-haired man,
and his measured, robotic voice,
has hunted me since—
and enters me tonight
through The Talking Heads’ searing,
apocalyptic version of the song. . . .

These were the best moments of my life,
alone in Vegas for six weeks
keeping a beautiful woman company
while she obtained her divorce.

Three Poems by Karen Murai

Dictionary

This is where I count the hours
in the word "carnival."
Where autumn dries its bones.
It's a place that holds things
silent as a white sheet,
while I vacation in a land of
hibernation by the tonnage.

A, acre, alto, America.
A different shore on
every syllable.
Give me a word for the
mourning of houses when it rains
through an open window.
Give me a word for the angle
of daydreaming's undertow,
for the song
pulled out of the scalp.
And leave me here with
me, memory and meridian.
Leave me with a Memphis
that's counted all its people.

The Unnecessary

A shoe full of water left on a porch,
almost menacing like a swing
that begins to move by itself.

So unnecessary and yet you'd
hate to move it. It seems to
have a purpose, it snatches
from you something like open-
mouthed sleep. Though it's really,
only, just sitting there
like a hand in a lap.

Funny how the unnecessary
can seem so important,
expanding, contracting,
cleaning itself. Whatever it is,
it won't let us in. It folds
inside itself like a dying star,
in a way it's superior, as
original as every murder.

You'd like to take it home somehow
and set it on a table, but
you collide with its intentions,
you'd tickle it to nothing.

Better to just walk by.

It's an accident seen at a
distance, just a curl of smoke
high in the sky.

Walk up the steps and let the
screen door slam behind you.

It will be something you mention.

Postcard from Jupiter, Tennessee

Firecracker Capital of the U.S.A.
Barefoot Las Vegas. A place devoted
to the possibilities of a spark.
3 a.m. we pull in. 24 hour
fireworks mall, where the pinstriped neon
bullies the sky like traffic from the stars.
Like a bullseye, it creates its
own concentration.
The clerk behind the counter,
spit-slicked and watchful,
has a toothpick in his lips
and a drawl like a meal
stuck in his throat. He nods
to the shoppers in the China gaudy aisles.
They have come for their Flying Pagodas,
their Giant Sidewinders, great tin hens
laying eggs of fire.
There's the five boom salute,
there's the nine boom salute, and the
guaranteed fifteen big boom salute.
It's a question of modesty
that weds the hand, while I
wonder what it's like to live here,
in mortal fear of a smoking cigarette.
And the fifth of July—letdown or relief?
Gosh, I don't know. I'm just
flashing through the atmosphere,
washing the windows and speeding to Georgia,
where families grow like fences
and the earth breaks open in a pout.

Summer Storms

Larry Woiwode

The storms of summer are the most memorable. One might happen in this way: out of the stillness of a humid afternoon, in the midst of which you sit with a gnat whining at your ear in enhancement of your solitude, you hear a rending as of a tree splitting down its middle, and then an explosion like a crate of dynamite goes off. After you recover, and begin a tour of the house to close the windows, the rain starts, or the hail, or a combination of them, and you might wonder, fearing a tornado, why it is that you've never trained your family to take a quick route to the safest part of the basement when they feel a trembling through the house like the approach of an overloaded locomotive.

What is so pernicious about summer storms is the resistance in our nature to admit them. We acknowledge the possibility of storms in the spring, yes, when rain on the roof can assume the sound of a waterfall; or in the winter, with a howling wind accompanying drifting snow; or even in the fall, when heavy-bodied rain tears off the last of the leaves and pastes them over spearing stubble. But summer is the season we're to be let off, to be free of this, as we expect, after the ingrained

conditioning of years in school, to be freed from all our onerous chores. So summer storms set us outside our expectations, and often isolate us physically, since we don't take the precautions we do during other seasons; we expect to bask in stillness, taking summer off as recklessly as—well, that storm on its way.

It was the summer of 1980, the same season in which I watched twin tornadoes set down from a black-green sky and finally spin themselves out without harm. I was working in an outer shed on a farm in North Dakota, when I realized that I was enveloped in utter silence. Then in the distance I heard the rumbling of that approaching locomotive. I thought of my family in the house and went for the door of the shed and opened it against a sound like rifle fire. Hailstones the size of marbles, then golf balls, were ricocheting off everything in sight. A few hit my hand at the half-open door. I pulled it shut, and out one of the high windows, which I had newly installed that summer but hadn't yet equipped with locks, I saw the anvil-shaped cloud, and then, with a sudden drop in pressure I could feel inside my ears, all four windows sprang wide, wobbling on their hinges, and pages of a hand-written manuscript started climbing out the closest opening in a chattering stream.

I grabbed at the pages, batting some down, but only stirred things up worse, and now the shed was shaking and everything loose or on a surface was springing for the windows in a rattling swirl worse than moths around my face. The hail had forced the door inward, I saw, and went for it, but so much ice had built up I couldn't get it closed, and suddenly a fresh wash of rain, mixed with hail, sprang from the exact direction to enter the door, and a carpet I'd lugged all the way from New York rumpled up and then lifted against my legs with the wind. I was soaked and dripping in seconds. "And it's summer!" I almost cried out loud, as if my statement could bring this incongruous situation to an end.

After the small tornado I gathered from our fields as much of the manuscript as I could immediately get my hands on, and my daughter and my niece, who was visiting, began to make wider rounds. Over a hundred pages were lost, but by

the time the two of them had covered about a hundred acres, alert to the glints of pages, the task of reconstructing the manuscript began to seem less hopeless. Each sheet had to be spread out to dry, and some were battered so badly it took tape to reassemble them, but I had written in pencil, not ink; nearly everything was legible, and as I continued to recover more pages or shreds of them over the summer, I began to think that nearly nothing was irrevocable.

I have been in summer storms as bad, when a house trembled above the corner of the basement where my family huddled, praying; when a waterspout developed off a beach on Lake Michigan, so distant over the water a group of us blithely went on with our picnic, only to see it suddenly swerve inland, tilting and swaying at its top, and start up the beach as all of us scattered, everything from the tables going up, and soon become so overweighted with sand it gave out with a sound like the contents of a swimming pool falling from five stories.

The glory of summer storms is their diversity: heat lightning traveling like networks of nerves through evening clouds; the hazy pinpricking rains of the Pacific Northwest; bronze-tinged banks of smog over L.A., and the dangerous wind-driven sea past Catalina Island as the smog moves off; storms of cottonwood pollen along inland rivers, called "summer snow" by French voyageurs, and the sudden, startling August snows of the upper Rockies; firestorms in western forests darkening a dozen states with pine-sweet smoke; sleet ticking against steel derricks and oil drums in Manitoba; the magnetic storming of Northern Lights over the upper latitudes, igniting the entire dome of heaven with pulsing currents of gold and pastel; a cloudburst descending from a lime-green sky along the Texas Gulf—a gullywasher in which torn-off leaves skate down a clay-brown current laced with foam; the windstorms, termed "monsoons" by locals, that travel across the Arizona desert in late July, piling up such towering clouds of dusty silica the dimmed sun shimmers like a coppery star; the tropical rains of southern Florida that come like clockwork, every day near noon, falling in great dollops of drops large as quarters, and then rise in steamy humidity to fall at the same hour the next

day; atmospheric inversions over Chicago, and the stilled, muffled air that tastes of ozone; the rains that transform New York into an equatorial capital in August, when even potted ferns outside a hotel appear to wilt in the sticky texture, and all of the best psychiatrists, even those who served residencies in Vietnam, take off for Europe or the Cape.

And then there is the peculiar summer storm that most of us have experienced at least once. You rent a house or cabin at the ocean or a lake or cape or bayou or bay, and arrive with the whole family, one of the few opportunities you'll have to enjoy the summer together. The first night, as you lie in bed trying to sleep, you become aware of a sound like squirrels scrabbling on the roof. Rain. You fall asleep to the sound and wake to blue light and go to the window; it hasn't let up. It's a gentle summer rain, such a dallying drizzle you can scarcely make out the drops, the kind of rain you look forward to for your lawn's sake — but not here. The children are arguing. You get out the broken and taped boxes of picture puzzles, reproduced in the garish colors of the forties, pull an old murder-mystery from a bookshelf, and crawl back into bed to wait this out.

It doesn't let up. At the grocery or general store the locals are exultant; this will be great for the crops, they crow. Such a *gentle* summer rain, they say. Back at the rented sanctum your spouse complains that you're mixing the drinks too stiffly and having one right after the other. The children won't stop arguing. You suggest that they run out and play in the rain, splash in puddles, and at their looks you realize they've aged. And you remember that it's in the spring, anyway, when puddles attract them; by summer they want the real thing. They're *bored*, they say, and you wonder why it is that when you talked for weeks about this vacation, you found it necessary, like a bland travel poster, to emphasize the sun so much. You go to the window once more and experience the perverse joy of the natives; there is no sign of this letting up, and the grass and leaves everywhere look bejewelled with billions of drops. To break up the worst of the children's fights you take down a

chess set and call a son to you at the card table you've set up. The rain continues overhead until the last day of your rental.

Out on the beach, finally in the sun, you're grudgingly grateful at least for this; and you realize that the time has been instructive. You'll have to stop drinking. Your wife, you've learned, wants a new car, since it's largely fallen to her to transport the children everywhere; and your youngest son, about whom you've harbored a secret fear of his being slow, is more than your equal at chess, and has perhaps always only needed your concern and encouragement. And the daughter you thought was becoming a slugabed actually gets up as early as always, but now spends an hour each morning at the reading you've recommended, and then another hour at the mirror. Of all of the children, she is the one who has most grown up—suddenly a young woman—and you might have missed this, along with the way she's beginning to take on half of your characteristics, if it hadn't been for this season of enforced closeness caused by the gentlest of summer rains.

Now that the elements are in place, there must be a final storm, the one that struck when I was thirteen. I was working that summer on a ranch near the Montana border, twenty miles from the nearest town, riding horses every day, helping with the livestock and haying, and I was interested in a girl—the daughter of the nearest neighbor, several miles up out of the river valley the ranch lay in, across coulee-intersected hills. Sibbhon, I'll call her. Her father, a Skoal-dipping cowboy, was known for his skill with the fiddle and his temper, and I rode with him and the family in their car every Sunday to church, a forty-mile drive. If Sibbhon's brother got close enough on the backseat to touch her (I sat at the opposite window, in torment at her nearness), her freckled face flamed to the roots of her black hair, and she let him have it so hard with an elbow he doubled over. She was fifteen.

She was celebrating her birthday that summer, and invited me to the party, which I thought meant *me*; that is, I figured I was her date. But the wife of the rancher I worked for said,

"If I know Sibbhon, she's invited every man and boy who can stand upright from here to Miles City."

On the day of her party, one of those summer winds that plague the western plains, like an endless sirocco, started up. I began dressing two hours early; I'd bought a new pair of boots from a mail-order catalogue, a new cowboy shirt, buckskin riding gloves, and one of those basket-weave cowboy hats, spray-painted white, that were the style. I saddled up Lady, an aging mare who was mine to ride that summer, and saw through her skittishness that the weather was getting worse. Rapid black clouds were stretching so thickly across the sky it was turning dark. By the time I led Lady to the ranch house it seemed we were in the middle of an eclipse.

"Should I go?" I asked the rancher, who had turned on the pole light and stepped outside.

"Why wouldn't you?" he asked, in the cheery, encouraging way he had of dealing with everything, even nature.

"It's so dark—" I wanted to mention the storm.

"Lady knows the way."

His wife came to the screen door, in yellow kitchen light that seemed to contain warmth, and said, "You wouldn't want Sibbhon to think you aren't man enough to ride a few miles to see her on her birthday, would you?"

The rancher helped me mount; I couldn't reach the stirrups. "Go to the spring and take the trail east," he said. "It hits at their gate. Snug the gate up good."

He had stepped back as he spoke and I could barely see him below his hat brim. I swung Lady around on a road I couldn't see, it was so dark, and was about to turn back when I saw the rancher's wife still at the door. I gave up trying to make out the road, and kept Lady true to course by the sound of her hooves on packed ground. And when I was off the road? In my hesitation of thought Lady pivoted and headed for home. She was headstrong if she sensed you didn't have the upper hand—"muley," the rancher called her—and it took some doing to turn her back.

The spring was a half mile off, and by the time we got there I was tired of trying to hold my hat on and keep her headed

right. While I looked up the darkened valley, she found the spring, from the way her head went down, nearly jerking the reins from my gloved hands, and I let her drink. The spring was in the crevice of a valley extending to the hilltops, and the trail, I knew from herding cows, ambled along the topside of the valley. I started her up and she resisted, so I prodded her flanks, and then my hat went as a wind whooped down the draw, hitting us broadside so hard Lady crowhopped. I slid off, shaking, and gripped the reins, my lifeline in the dark. There was my hat, a dim glow in the darkness ahead. I reached for it and struck stone—a boulder, a mistake, the sort of place rattlesnakes hid.

I finally found it wedged in a stand of buckbrush that scraped at me as I extracted it, and shoved it inside my shirt and snapped the shirt shut. I was able to remount by climbing the hillside and leaping across the saddle. Lady took off at a gallop, as if she'd received her reward in a drink at the spring, and was now bent on getting home. We were halfway back before I got her stopped and turned in the right direction again.

She started up the valley with her head down into the wind, as if each step would be her last, and I could hear the fluttery clatter of the leaves on the oaks to my right. There was a break in the clouds and for a moment I saw the treetops bending like whips in the wind. As we came over the crest of the hill I had to gasp to get my breath; in my battle with Lady I hadn't noticed the wind had grown so fierce. It felt as if gusts of it would lift me out of the saddle, and with a popping sound my bulging shirt flew open and I grabbed my hat but spooked Lady, who seemed to be going sideways about fifty. I could hear the trees again and was frightened not so much by the shapes I imagined they were assuming as the actual whipsawing I had seen, and they were louder now. One could break off. Lady stopped. I slapped at both sides of her rump with the reins but she wouldn't move. "Lady!" I yelled, the word tearing away, and she yawed to one side as if she would go over, then backed into the wind, her head down. There was the sensation of a hand smoothing the back of my shirt and I swung around and slapped at it. Her blowing tail. No matter what

I did I couldn't get her to move, and she started trembling underneath me.

"All right," I said, and slid out of the saddle. "You'll have to show me the way."

I stumbled through the dark, gripping the reins, and occasionally she nudged my side as if to say she appreciated it that I was down here with her. Wherever here was. I couldn't see the ground but could feel it; rough; my boots would be ruined, if I got through this. She stopped, balking again. I turned my back to the wind, pulling at the reins, and ran into a barbed-wire fence. I put my hand out and felt a gate post; in our struggle she had directed me here and was telling me to stop. I got her through and cinched the gate up, and after we'd walked a ways I saw a line of light above us. It was a hilltop, and over its crest I saw gold shafts slanting from every window of the house and the barn at Sibbhon's; her father was scheduled to play the fiddle for her birthday celebration and dance.

I ran into a boulder big enough to serve as a mounting step, leaped up on Lady, pulled out my hat, and held it on with one hand as I let her have her head. At the barn I leaped off in the midst of Lady's halting, as Sibbhon's father did, but no one was there to notice. No welcome. I eased open a sliding door and saw Sibbhon in the alley of the barn, in the calico shirt and tight jeans she wore to church, standing on straw bales in a blaze of light.

"Well!" she said.

"Am I late?"

"Sheet! And don't bring that damn clubfoot old mare in here!" she cried. "Tie her up outside!"

I did, and Sibbhon slid the door shut as I stepped inside, into warmth. I pulled off my mangled hat.

"That damn storm's about done it," she said, and glared at me with half-crazed eyes, as if I were the storm.

"What?"

"Daddy's in the house so drunk he'll be lucky if he sees Tuesday!"

What day is it, I almost asked, remembering her party was to be on Friday; I felt I'd been riding a month.

She strode over to the bales, the boots under her jeans swooshing in hollow sounds with each step, and jumped up on some boards laid over them in a platform, then turned as if in expectation, her fists on her hips. I walked over to her with my hat in my hands, hoping she might teach me to dance, or better, allow the stormy correspondences I saw in her so often to break over me.

"That's it!" she said. "We might as well go on into the blame old house and tie this birthday off."

"What?"

"With Ma and the kids. End it!"

"Your birthday?"

"Don't you get it? Look around! You're the only damn person here!"

So we wait out storms sometimes to be reminded of their power to isolate, though there is always another side. After that summer night, no storm in or out of nature ever threatened me as much, because Sibbhon's dismissal of me was also a recognition of my tenacity, or foolhardiness—the nature of one willing to strike through upheaval for the other side, knowing now that there is another side and knowing, too, what is waiting there: always another survivor.

Silence, Exile, and Cunning

Robie Macauley

That year, we were going to France in June—small, out-of-the-way places in Guyenne and the Dordogne—and so I decided to brush up my college French (*se remettre le Français que j'ai appris à l'université*), even though I realize it's a losing game. As everyone knows, the French are delighted to encounter one's college French—they either ignore it and ask in plain English, "What language are you trying to speak, Monsieur?" or else they reply with lightning speed—employing idioms unheard of in French II (three credits), and quickly activating verbs in the pluperfect subjunctive. Either way, it's sure to be a big laugh (*c'est désopilant*) from Dunkerque to Perpignan.

Once at my neighborhood chain bookstore (*la librairie avoisinante*), I began to sample the shelf of phrase books, ten-easy-lessons, and learn-French-fast. The language shelf is at the back of the store, next to the books on knitting and origami—and probably is stocked by the same buyer. Most of the books had bright-colored national flags on their covers along with an attractive drawing of the Arc de Triomphe or a flamenco dancer, to suggest one of the marvels awaiting us in Europe. But the contents of many of these books reminded me of my friend who, traveling on a train in Austria not long

ago, looked over the shoulder of a boy studying the page of an English grammar book that bore the example, "Where can I buy a pair of plus-fours?" It was either that sort of thing, or else the text was depressingly brisk, touristic, and practical. On the one hand, "Madame Robert, may I have the honor to present my sister-in-law (*ma Belle soeur*), Mademoiselle Jenkins?" seemed highly theoretical in that: a) I have no sister-in-law; b) I wouldn't dream of going to France with her if I did; and c) I would expect her to make her own way in French society without any help from me. On the other hand, I found myself overwhelmed with boredom (*je me suis ennuyé à mourir*) at the idea of memorizing "I wish to cash a traveler's check," "There seems to be something wrong with the clutch. It makes a funny noise" (NOT *un bruit amusant*), or "I desire your recommendation as to which wine goes with the lamb stew."

There was one mod book that instructed me how to say "You can't fight City Hall" (although the idiom advised had a quaint flavor—"Vous vous battez contre des moulins," more suggestive of a remark by Sancho Panza than a streetwise Parisian). It even offered me the wherewithal to make such remarks as "I'm up shit creek" or "If my aunt had balls, she'd be my uncle" in flawless French.

Since I couldn't imagine how to work any of this into a conversation, I walked around the corner to the Brattle Bookshop, a secondhand dealer (*un brocanteur*) with a vast collection of frayed bindings, foxed paper, dog-ears, coffee stains, and pencilled marginalia. And, sure enough, on a dark shelf at the back of the shop, I discovered a singular French grammar-cum-phrase book.

It was titled *Thèmes François & Anglois*, or, *French and English Exercises, A New Edition*. The author was listed as Lewis Chambaud. It was bound in scabby calf, the pages were yellowed, and it had been printed in London in 1776, the year of our Declaration of Independence and the publication date of notable books by Edward Gibbon, Adam Smith, and Thomas Paine. I bought it for two dollars, on the theory that therein I wouldn't have to face the latest horrors of Franglais

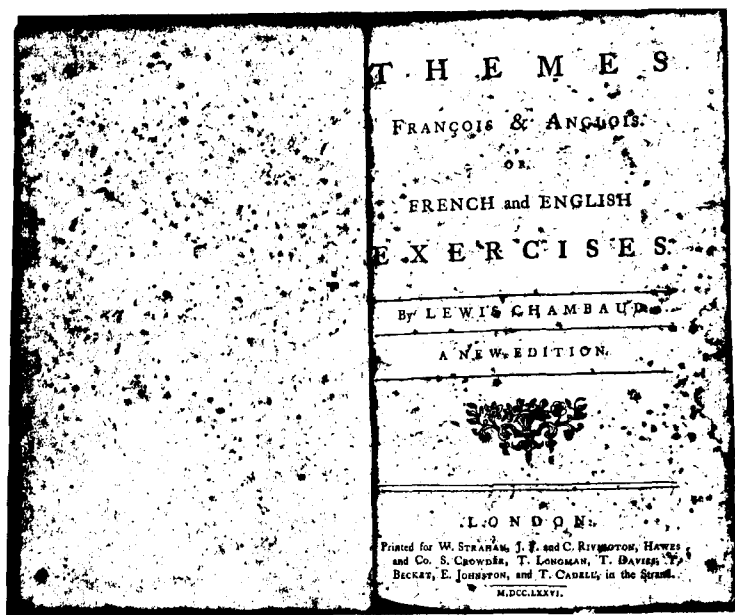
and — romantic notion — I might learn a little of a purer brand of French.

When I opened the small volume that evening, I came across its first peculiarity on the third page. Under the heading ADVERTISEMENT, the booksellers (actually the publishers — “W. Strahan, J.F. and C. Rivington, Hawes and Co., S. Crowder, T. Longman, T. Davies, T. Becket, E. Johnston, and T. Cadell, in the Strand,” apparently a regular Simon and Schuster of their day) had some testy things to say about their author.

They remarked, “It matters very little to know the reasons which have induced Mr. CHAMBAUD to refer his Readers to his Grammar, for rules which should have been inserted in this performance.” It appears that poor Chambaud, in an effort to sell copies of his other book, *Grammar of the French Tongue*, had slyly omitted from his manuscript the grammatical rules supposed to go along with the exercises in this book. But Messrs. Strahan, Rivington, Hawes, et al. had caught him at it. Not ones to be hoodwinked by this Frenchy trick, they had, they said, extracted the rules from his *Grammar* and printed them along with the exercises.

After the introduction to verbs (pluperfect tense: I had received. Thou had'st undone. He had girded. We had enjoined. Ye had disappeared. They had plaistered), I began to read through the exercises: correct uses of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, comparatives, conjunctions, interrogatives, and so on. The fuller models of usage proved to be even more charming than he girding and they plaistering. No traveler's cheques, no asking subway directions, no instructions for sending a telex. On the other hand, examples that dealt with basic things in life such as food and drink, apt quotations from Horace, busy swindlers, unmarried heiresses, epigrams in moral philosophy, flattery for the king, duelling preparations, precautions about highwaymen, and edifying episodes from Greek history. M. Chambaud was, it seemed, not only a man of learning but a man of the world as well.

Then, there were sudden, startling glimpses of eighteenth-century life, hardly calculated to reassure the tourist:



BOOKS Published by LEWIS CHAMBAUD, and Printed for the Proprietors.

I. A DICTIONARY, French and English, containing the Signification of Words, with their different Uses, the Terms of Arts, Sciences, and Trades; the Contractions, Forms of Speech, Idioms, and Proverbs, used in both Languages. The Whole extracted from the best Writers. Price 1*l*. 16*s*. 4*d*.

II. A GRAMMAR of the French Tongue. With a Prefatory Discourse, containing an Essay on the proper Method for teaching and learning that Language. A new Edition. Price 3*s*.

III. The TREASURY of the French and English Languages. Part I. containing: 1. A Vocabulary, French and English. 2. Familiar Forms of Speech, upon the most common and useful Subjects. Being equally necessary to the French, and other Foreigners understanding French, to learn English; and the best, if not the only Help extant for them to attain the Knowledge of it. The 4*th* Edition, Price 2*l*. 6*d*.

IV. EXERCISES to the Rules of Construction of French Speech. Consisting of Passages extracted out of the best French Authors. With a Reference to the Grammar Rules, to be turned back into French. The 3*d* Edition, with Additions. Price 2*s*.

V. The RUDIMENTS of the French Tongue: Or, An easy and rational Introduction to French Grammar. Wherein the Principles of that Language are methodically digested. Price 1*s*. 6*d*.

ADVERTISEMENT
 Concerning the SECOND EDITION.

IT matters very little to know the reasons which have induced Mr. CHAMBAUD to refer his Readers to his Grammar, for rules which should have been inserted in this performance. These rules will be found in this Edition at the head of each chapter, which is also enriched with such French and English exercises as have been thought necessary to exemplify them. To make this Book entirely the Author's own, the exercises have been extracted out of his Grammar.

She has put out her eyes (*Elle s'est crevé les yeux*). She took care not to speak within the house; but when she was without, she began to cry out from the middle of the street to the people that were within.

A fragment of some horrifying event whose end or beginning we will never know. But whose middle—that blinded woman with a bloody face standing on the cobblestones and screaming her accusations at the people in the house—we will probably find hard to forget.

Then, there are quick caricatures, a little like Rowlandson in a nasty mood:

'Tis a tall, fair man who has married that short black girl of a Spanish extraction. She is of a squeamish constitution. He has crooked legs and she a long red nose.

Or, there are the four terse sentences that succeed each other:

The coach run over his body. 'Twas I that closed his eyes. Give me my life. I beg for my life. (*Donnez-moi la vie. Je vous demande la vie.*)

Could these be shreds of memory from some personal experience? Is this the echo of an episode on some desolate post road in England? Or something from a nightmare? Whose voice is that pleading?

Or, again, sometimes an example will sound like an entry in a Samuel Pepys-like diary:

We are to sup with the most silly and the most impertinent of women (*les plus fottes & les plus impertinentes des femmes*).

and:

He makes me laugh; he says that he is the first to know everything that comes to pass, and yet he is the only one who knows nothing.

and:

I like her well enough; and I would marry her if she had money.

As I read further into the book, I began to sense an odd kind of continuity. Necessarily, most of the grammatical illustrations are fairly mundane, at least by Chambaud's standards. (Interrogative: "What crime has that man committed?" On the uses of *il y a*: "Some people are like ballads that are only sung for awhile." "*Il y a des gens qui ressemblent aux vaudevilles qu'on ne chant que pendant un certain tems.*") [sic: "tems," the archaic version of "temps."]

As I delighted in passages that carried a whiff of London streets or the sound of Thameside din, whole sequences began to stand out in such detail—sharp and specific in the way that Defoe is specific—that I finally began to see them as personal. No other grammar I'd ever opened used the first person singular so lavishly or related anecdotes with such an autobiographical feel to them. I began to suspect that behind the grammarian hid an author who, for reasons of his own, was—either deliberately or unconsciously—relating the story of his life.

What if you were a Frenchman (I speculated) condemned to live among the English, fated to earn a pittance by tutoring in French, fated to drink poor wine and eat worse cooking, doomed to endure English rudeness in private and violence in public, and, worst of all, forced by necessity to write grammar books for irascible English booksellers? And what if the urge struck you to write—out of vanity, complaint, or revenge—a little memoir of your life? But no one, of course, would want to print the autobiography of an obscure grammar teacher, least of all Strahan, Rivington, Hawes, et al. in the Strand.

But, suddenly, *on s'inspire d'une idée* (you are inspired). "Silence, exile, and cunning!" you think to yourself—you will tuck your story, suitably disguised, into the exercise book you are now hack-writing for the bookseller consortium. Into the subjunctive you will slip your sorrows; among the indirect objects you will expose your aspirations. Surely some readers in the future will detect your code, push the garble of conjugations and declensions aside, and discern you and your history. Can this be possible? A few years ago, there was a fad for

happening upon “found” poetry or “found” sculpture. Had I come across a “found” autobiography on the Brattle’s shadowy back shelf?

Chambaud (if indeed that is his name) seems to give a clear indication of this intention in Chapter Two (uses of different tenses), when he cites some remembrances of things past.

“Quand j’étois à Paris, j’allois tous les matins . . .” When I was at Paris, I used to go every morning to the Academy, where I did ride three horses. Then I fenced. And in the afternoon I apply’d myself to Mathematics.

My mother was a handsome woman in her youth, and was so still some years before she died. My aunt was handsome too, and had a great many admirers in her time (*beaucoup d’adorateurs*); she is of a more vigorous constitution than my mother was.

My cousin was a sweet girl ten years ago. She had then and has still very regular features. Her complexion was of lilies and roses, but grief has made a sad havock (*le chagrin à fait un triste dégât chez elle*) in her person. The poor girl grieves herself to death; yet she would recover her charms, if she was married. A husband is the true specific in her case.

More than a brief glimpse into the life of the Chambaud family, of course, but full of mysteries. Consider: two beautiful Parisian sisters of good family; they seem blessed by every good fortune. In time, they both marry and have children — Mme. Chambaud a son who grows up to be not only vigorous and athletic but a passionate student of mathematics; and Mme. X, her sister, a lovely daughter.

But disaster comes. Mme. Chambaud, still beautiful, takes ill and dies an early death. And, into the family of Mme. X comes a great sorrow. It is so painful that her daughter’s beauty fades and, ten years later, she is still suffering and still unmarried. What has happened?

Could it have some connection with the fact that Chambaud here avoids any mention of either his father or his uncle-by-marriage? What crime, what brutal desertion, or what shameful death remains unspoken? Somewhere, we assume,

there must be internal evidence about this enigma—concealed among the lessons on pronouns, masked by the conjunctions?

Careful attention to the internal evidence reveals a great many biographical facts about Lewis Chambaud. We know how long he had been in England when he wrote his book, where he lived, that he was a tutor in French, something about how he dressed, the books he had read, what his avocations were and his drinking habits, his ideas about manners and morals, his attitude toward women, his disappointments in love, his conclusions (ambivalent) about the English, the character (but not the proper names) of some of his friends, and a little about his travels.

But the mystery around his father remains, even though there are occasional references elsewhere to the elder Chambaud. One puzzling allusion tells us:

An observation which my grandfather had made, and he communicated it to my father, was the cause of a study which lasted all their life; and has made the chief business of mine.

The French word *observation* has much the same meanings as its English descendent, and one of those is the scientific observation of some phenomenon or phenomena of nature. The word “study” (or *étude*) suggests this as Chambaud’s import. A guess at the birthdate of his grandfather would put it some time between 1680 and 1700, shortly after Fontenelle’s popularization of science, and in the era of the great *philosophes*.

But, again, a mystery. Nowhere is there a clue to the discovery or “observation” that preoccupied the men of the Chambaud family. No Chambaud is listed in the Larousse biographical section or in any dictionary of science. There may be a hint—though no revelation—in the fact that Chambaud includes several of his own short essays on botany and biology near the end of the book.

We learn, in other places, that “my father has bought a fine marble statue” (*une belle statue de marbre*) and—perhaps a clue to the troubles in the family—“The best of all fathers is become the most terrible and inexorable father.”

As for the facts about Lewis Chambaud himself: he tells us that he has been in England for fourteen years (which would put his arrival at about 1761). He lives in London, and we know exactly where:

I live in St. Paul-street, near a Bookseller, over against a Grocer, at the sign of the King's Head. The best way to get to my house is to pass through the tavern, since I live behind it.

But, sometime during the fourteen years, he has acquired a small property in the country—perhaps near Edmonton, because he knows the exact mileage to that village. (*Il y a sept milles de Londres à Edmonton.*) Yet, sad to say, his little farm is not very prosperous. In the chapter on pronouns, he takes some anonymous visitor on a tour of it:

“Regardez ce bel oeillet . . .” Look at this fine pink; it smells charmingly. Gather it. Let me smell it. Pick also a rose. I do not love roses; they have too strong a smell; they make my head ache.

Let us go into the poultry yard (*la basse cour*); it is open. We have a dozen of hens. They lay eggs every day, but they won't sit upon them. Look at these eggs; they are fine, but they are good for nothing.

Look at that tree; it is well-blossomed, and yet it produces no fruit. I will cut it down if it gives no fruit this year. These two trees are dead: 'tis the moss that has killed them (*c'est la mousse qui les a fait mourir*). You see that it stops the pores of the trees.

The cow is old; she gives no more milk. We will sell her next week.

It is no wonder that Chambaud seems to prefer the house behind the tavern in St. Paul's Street to these barren trees and animals. But London is a constant astonishment and the English are a violent and turbulent people:

There is a man in the street who says that there was yesterday a great quarrel in the Square, where there were three men

killed: and he swears that if he had been there, there would have been a great many more; because he has heard that two friends of his were wounded. They also say that several merchants have been cruelly beat there; and that out of ten soldiers that are in prison, four will be hanged, and six condemned to the Gallies.

There are many other examples: "He was killed with the first thrust, and his brother was shot with a pistol" and "The two brothers and the cousin have committed the murder; they have tied the man, and he has knockt him on the head." One day his house is robbed: "I have left the room and the closet locked with the key. The room and the closet, the trunk and the box were opened. He says that he found the bureau and the box opened. I have found part of my money stolen away." As for the English legal system — *quelle bizarrerie!*: "Of the magistrates, some voted for the death of the accused person, and some for the death of the accuser."

He himself carries a sword and has had to use it at times:

I have bought a new sword: the hilt of it is silver, but I don't like its shell. I will not part with the old one. It has done me too much service. I have owed my life twice to it. Only I will get it cleaned and put a new hilt to it, and it will be of service to me still by night.

Fires were frequent occurrences. The London Fire Brigade was still fifty-seven years in the future, but you could subscribe to the services of one or another private fire company (equipped with leather buckets and a hand-drawn water cart) if you could afford it. Chambaud reports on one incident:

Yesterday morning a fire broke out in that house which was building, and was consumed in two hours. They say that the Joiner's men made a fire with chips to warm themselves, and that they set the house on fire.

There are other brief sketches from city or country. Our author remarks sarcastically on those shop signs on brackets

overhanging the streets—ever-present in Hogarth's pictures—that explained to the illiterate what was sold inside (three sugar loaves for a grocer, three golden balls for a goldsmith, a hand for a glover, and so on.) These ponderous boards could be dangerous. Once one of them fell onto Birde Lane, carrying the whole shopfront with it and killing four pedestrians. Chambaud, with his characteristic touch of scorn, says:

Daily absurdities hang out upon the sign-posts of this city, to the great scandal of Foreigners as well as those of our own country, who are curious spectators of the same. Our streets are filled with blue bears, black swans, and red lions; not to mention flying pigs, and hogs in armour, with many other creatures more extraordinary than any in the deserts of Africa.

As for more personal things about himself, Chambaud reveals:

I play sometimes at picket, and at quadrille, to oblige the company.

I do not love to play at games of chance, as at dice, or even at cards; but I like to play sometimes at bowls, at billiards, at tennis, or nine-pins.

I can play a little upon the German flute. I never go to see your brother without carrying my German flute along with me.

In various places, he tries to define his idea of the good life and happiness:

It is very indifferent whether a man can dance or no: but there is an absolute necessity that his mind should be formed.

It is obvious that most people are of a contrary opinion. It seems to them that dancing, gaming, and hunting, and the ordinary pleasures of life are what constitutes happiness, and it is certain that they have no right notions of things.

If it be true that they have wrong notions of things, in what does happiness consist? It is very certain that we can make our happiness, and that it is within ourselves?

It is not true that we can make it entirely ourselves; and it

is surprising that the Stoics have thought, if ever any of them heartily believed a thing so ridiculous, that one could be happy under the most sharp pains of the gout. Health and riches are not in our power; but it seems that those outward goods are the least ingredients of happiness.

About the English, Chambaud is either of two minds or else very cagey. Sometimes he praises them and other times he finds them barbarous. As for their wine, it shows up frequently in such sentences as: "I ask for red wine and you give me white wine that is like water," and "Good small beer, or even mere water is better than bad wine," and "I never drink wine; not that I don't love it but because it is good for nothing in England." French wine, it should be noted, was expensive in England at the time ("tis more than a groat [fourpence] a bottle," Chambaud tells us). Most people drank the sweet, brandy-fortified Portuguese wines or "hock" from the Rhine region.

In one place, he says, "The English have great advantages over the other nations," and "There are civil people, and handsome women in England," and "Twould be the antipodes of reason not to acknowledge that London is the general office of wonders, the center of good taste, wit, and gallantry."

But this might just be easy flattery for his English readers. We can see where Chambaud's heart really lies in a four-page essay on France in the second part of the book. There, he is moved to say: "There is no country in Europe whose situation is so charming, and where it is so pleasant to live. . . . Everything that can minister to the delights and wants of life abounds there. . . . France, in general, is the best country in Europe. It can do without other nations, but they cannot, but with great difficulties, do without it, either on account of the necessities or the comforts of life." As for the king of France (then Louis XV), "he takes place above all other Christian Princes except the Emperor."

Why, then, was Lewis Chambaud living in a house behind a tavern in damp, smoky London rather than in the most charming country of Europe? Why was he constantly scribbling

(he wrote five books of instruction in French and a French-English dictionary) for surly booksellers? (One bit of dialogue, perhaps autobiographical, at least a typical exchange between author and publisher in any period, goes like this:

“What have you done with my book? Have you sold it?”

“What book are you speaking of?”)

As always, he is enigmatic, and the answer as to his presence in England has to be sought further.

Lewis Chambaud arrived in England about 1761, during the Seven Years War. England was aligned with Prussia against France and Austria in that conflict, but, in those tolerant days, governments did not worry much about “enemy aliens” living in their countries. The British sent some troops to help Frederick the Great but their major interest was not in Europe but in rooting out French colonies in Canada, India, and the Caribbean. While Frederick was staving off half the armies of Europe (French, Russian, Swedish, Austrian, and some German) with difficulty, England was taking the opportunity to found its empire.

There are echoes of war news in Chambaud, but no comment:

Have you not heard of the reports that are spread abroad? No: what are they? Have the allies got the victory, or have they been beat? It was said at first that we had got the victory; but now it is assured that we have been soundly beat. Yes, they say so, but how can one give credit to what is so variously reported? We are told that the enemies were inferior to us.

Order has been sent to the Admiral to set sail as soon as possible. It is hoped that he will be able to do it about the end of the month.

That mention of the admiral is interesting. In one place, Chambaud gives a complete, but outdated, listing of all the ships in the British fleet (a total of 237) and their dispositions, naming some real admirals (e.g., Admiral Vernon) and some invented ones (e.g., Admiral Haddock [Hawke?]). This seems

odd enough in a language exercise book and even odder in that Chambaud is not much interested in the war—and apparently has never seen a battle, because in one place he says, “Wars are not so bloody since gunpowder is used.”

There is one possible, though improbable, explanation for some of these puzzles—it is that Chambaud was a French spy. Under Louis XIV’s great minister, the Marquis de Louvois, France had built up a large and efficient espionage network. The Duchesse de Orléans commented: “Every Frenchman who went to Germany or Holland as an instructor in fencing, dancing, or riding, was in his [Louvois’s] pay and kept him informed of all that happened at those courts.” And why not a tutor of French in London?

Louis XV continued the espionage service (called *Le Sècret du Roi*) and, planning an invasion of England, posted two of his best men to London—the Marquis de La Rozière and the famous transvestite spy, the Chevalier D’Eon. Among other exploits, D’Eon stole a portfolio of secret Foreign Office papers and Rozière surveyed possible landing sites on the channel coast. Chambaud was in England at this time.

It would be foolish to expect a spy to give himself away in a book, even a cryptic one. But there is one entry in the *Thèmes* even more eccentric than usual. It goes:

“On dit que vous ne savez pas si on a reçu les lettres qu’on attendoit l’ordinaire dernier. . . .” They say that you don’t know if the letters have been received, which were expected last mail; and that in case they have not been received, or are not received today, fifty men are to be sent to the forest, where it has been thought the messenger has been robbed: because it is known that letters of great consequence have been given him. And as there is no doubt that the enemies have kept him, since we have sure advices that some of our letters have been seen in their hands; a spy has been sent to inquire underhand what has been reported; and he has been promised a reward.

Mail intercepts were one of the major means of espionage. David Kahn describes the British Secret Office as expert in

“unsealing diplomatic packets with such deftness that they could be resealed without evidence of tampering.” The British read most of the foreign mail that passed through the Post Office, and most other European powers did the same.

Naturally, they kept this practice as secret as possible, and it is a little extraordinary that a grammarian should interest himself in such matters. But this is, after all, the slightest of circumstantial evidence and there is no real evidence to tie Chambaud to the French Embassy spy operation. On the other hand, what force is strong enough to compel a true Frenchman to eat boiled food and drink sweet or watery wine for fourteen years?

If there was no apparent commercial or political reason for Chambaud’s fourteen years in England, the rationale must have been personal — and the personal subject that arises again and again in the *Thèmes* is women. More precisely, it is the problem of finding a wife. Even more precisely, it is the problem of finding a well-to-do English wife. He says:

Do you imagine that I am no longer fit to think of a wife? Is there a man of thirty that appears more fresh and vigorous than you see me? Does anybody see me want either coach or chair to carry me? Don’t I eat my four meals a day heartily? and can you find a stomach that has more strength than mine?

He adds:

I seek a wife that is tolerably well as to her person; and has besides some common sense and a little fortune.

And later, he will even forgo the little fortune:

A good housewife who loves her husband and children, keeps herself always clean, and never scolds, is a treasure. That is the wife I seek for.

And yet:

A handsome, well-shaped, virtuous, and rich woman is not always sufficient to make a man happy.

He considers the bluestockings:

A great mind in the body of a handsome woman is a wonder of nature. I should be glad to know some of those learned ladies. I know some of them who deserve that title.

And:

He sees many women without being in love with any.
The generality of women are coquets.

He imagines himself catching an heiress:

It is true that Miss A is to have a large fortune, but she is also very ugly. No matter, it is astonishing that nobody has asked her in marriage as yet. It is fitting that somebody should enjoy her fortune with her. It would be shameful that the thing would be otherwise.

It appears that she is not inclined to marry.

It is grievous, or is it a sad thing, for a young Lady that a man courts her for the sake of her fortune. However, it is not impossible that such a sweetheart should make her a good husband. On the contrary, it is very possible for her to be happy with him.

He describes a very strange courtship:

He does an hundred extravagant things above. He has torn her gloves in order to kiss her. He has broke her fan, because she hid her face with it. He has bit her finger ends. In short, one would think her his wife already.

He makes an attempt that ends in failure:

He allows whatever she desires.

She is never pleased, whatever he does.

She found herself in danger of yielding; but calling her virtue to mind, she upbraided herself with her weakness.

Every woman is frail, but every woman don't yield.

I would marry you tho' I were a king.

Tho' you were a king, I would not marry you.

So much for her—but, nevertheless:

Let women be what they will, one cannot live without them.

He meets someone else:

I spoke yesterday to a handsome woman.

They are two sisters: which shall I write to? To which you please.

She has not so much beauty as her sister; but she has as much liveliness, and is as lovely as she.

She has a charming face and neck. Her breast and arms are beautiful: one would think them artificially turned.

Tho' the notions of the soul are never so secret, and whatever care a man takes to hide them, they are no sooner formed, but they appear on his face.

He goes to see the lady:

I called yesterday at your house to see you and your man told me that you was gone into the country.

She replies:

I have made you wait, Sir, but you must take it kind of me not to find me at home. As I will be seen only by you, I chuse to avoid the importunities of some people, who think they have a right to speak to me at any time; and whom my servants dare not shut out of doors, altho' I have ordered them above a thousand times to do it.

Success! He answers:

One is too well paid for the trouble of waiting, Madam, when one is so happy as to see you one moment: and I will always wait with all my heart, when I shall be sure not to wait in vain.

We can assume the ceremony. The important fact is that:

She has brought him a considerable fortune.

And the effects are noticeable:

I love my seat; the gardens are very fine. I have altered the flower-gardens, and added groves and water-works. There are fine meadows round it. I likewise design to make alterations to my garden. I will make a terras-walk and a grotto under it.

* * *

We went to Bordeaux and Guyenne that June, to Roc Amadour, Lascaux and Carcassonne. I cashed traveler's cheques without a hitch, inquired about directions, and asked the sommelier's advice on wine. I never was able to work a remark on highwaymen, duelling, plaistering, or the errors of the Stoics into any conversation, but, at a small restaurant in Bergerac, I did receive a small compliment from the waiter. He said, "*Vous parlez comme un vieux livre, Monsieur.*" You talk like an old book, sir.

Bin Ramke

The Center for Atmospheric Research

Pei designed the building with views,
smooth masonry, and the mountains aligned
for a photo opportunity; inside are files
sufficient for forever, for fine tuning weather.

Great Spangled Fritillary, the watcher vaguely recalls
from Teach Yourself Lepidoptery, a book.
He wanted to live in a land of appropriate weather
with views of mountains and with music constant.

He wants to tell a story but who would listen,
like opera: Black women clean the floors
and shine the walls like silver nightly.
Computers whirl Platonic as nuns. Nothing

escapes naming; storms arranged in teacups
like anyone's collection, like rows of butterflies
pinned and satisfactory: this the new landscape.
Or there is a lewd father among the shrubbery

watching daughters in weather; he breathes heavily
and the wet wisdom begins, the storm gathering
to spill across the ridge, longed for.
Daughters must be warned against sincerity

like frantic violins: "He was a man of sympathetic
tendencies," read the official report. "He was
smaller than he looked and tended to lick chocolate
from his fingers in a lascivious manner."

He tried his wife's patience, it is true,
and lived alone throughout a marriage, kept
his own counsel. With such pretty symbols as
weather, he kept his own counsel.

A butterfly like weather; the climate like
laughter, the movement of small air. Clouds, too
have names. Clouds leave home to find themselves.
Good money after bad, the fathers say, and close

the door like Nature against their coming back.
The funny little ways children have of making
the world the color they always wanted. Sunset.
Birds. The mathematics of memory beginning

to swirl like cookie dough, like chocolate with egg
and sugar and vanilla and butter. A bowl to lick,
dangerous as delight, as ultraviolet. Home again!
begs the mother and soon the sorry child walks

that long allée as rain begins to pour. Past
such petty symbols the boy returns through architecture,
a silly gauntlet: the butterfly, the mother, the fit
signatures of loveliness. His parents at the door,

the little cottage in the woods, o Hansel home again
at last, the shining path. They said she was a whore.
Ours is not a simple age, and things are what they seem:
happily ever after with the malicious tiny rain.

Three Poems by Franz Wright

Untitled

Whether I grow old, betray my dreams, become a ghost

or die in flames
like Gram,
like Frank,
like Thomas James—

I think for a while I'll come back
as a guest to a childhood room
where the sun is the sun once again
and the wind in the trees is the wind
in the trees, and the summer afternoon
the endless summer afternoon
of books,
that only happiness . . .

I won't have written this.

Smell of leaves before rain, green

light that shines not
on, but from the
earth—

for me, too, failure

and loneliness darkened the world
and a fierce joy made it blaze
into unrecognizable beauty—

Forgotten in an Old Notebook

Outside the leaves are quiet
as their shadows. Hidden
in the leaves a bird is waiting
for it to get dark
to try its goodnight voice.
I have just looked in the mirror
and come and sat down at the table.
What happens to our faces?

Words

I don't know where they come from.
I can summon them
(sometimes I can)
into my mind,
into my fingers,
I don't know why. Or I'll suddenly hear them
walking, sometimes
waking—
they don't often come when I need them.
When I need them most terribly,
never.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Stuart Dybek is the author of the story collections *Childhood and Other Neighborhoods* (Ecco Press), and *The Coast of Chicago*, to be published by Knopf this spring.

Peter Matthiessen is co-founder of the *Paris Review*. Among his numerous and widely acclaimed books are *The Snow Leopard*, which won the National Book Award in 1978, *Far Tortuga*, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, and *The Tree Where Man Was Born*. *Killing Mr. Watson*, the novel from which this excerpt was taken, will be published by Random House in the spring.

Christoph Ransmayr was born in Wels, Austria in 1954. His first novel, *The Terrors of Ice and Darkness*, was published in Germany in 1984 and will be published by Grove Weidenfeld in 1991. *The Last World*, from which this excerpt is taken, is his second novel and was a bestseller upon publication in Germany. The novel, which has been translated into thirty languages, will be published by Grove Weidenfeld in the spring. **John E. Woods** has translated both *The Last World* and *The Terrors of Ice and Darkness* by Christoph Ransmayr. He has twice won the PEN Translation Prize, for *Perfume* by Patrick Süskind and *Evening Etched in Gold* by Arno Schmidt. The latter also won the American Book Award Translation Prize. He resides in San Diego, California.

Paul West is author of many novels, including *Rat Man of Paris*, *The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg* and *Caliban's Filibuster*, and is a previous winner of the Aga Khan Prize for Fiction. This fall Paris Review Editions will publish *Portable People*, a collection of short biographical sketches. *The Women of Whitechapel*, a novel about Jack the Ripper from

which this excerpt was taken, will be published by Random House in September.

Larry Woiwode is the author of numerous works of fiction, including *Poppa John. The Neumiller Stories*, a continued exploration of the protagonists of his *Beyond the Bedroom Wall* and *Born Brothers*, was recently published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. "Summer Storms" is included in the collection *Summer*, to be published by Addison-Wesley in May.

POETRY

John Ash has published three volumes of poetry, *The Goodbyes* (Carcanet, 1982), *The Branching Stairs* (1985) and *Disbelief* (1987). He was born in England, and currently resides in New York City. He received an Ingram-Merrill Fellowship in 1985.

Stephen Dunn's most recent collection of poetry is *Between Angels* (Norton). A new collection, *At the End of the Century*, will be published by Norton in 1991. He teaches at Stockton State College in New Jersey.

Thomas Frick, an editor at David R. Godine, writes for *Art in America* and composes texts for the Semaphore Dancetheatre.

Suzanne Gardinier's work has appeared in *Under 35: The New Generation of American Poets* and in *The Best American Poetry of 1989-90*. She teaches and lives in Sag Harbor, New York.

Melissa Green's book of poems, *The Squanicook Eclogues* (Norton, 1987), received the Norma Farber First Book Award from the Poetry Society of America and the Laran Younger Poets Award 1989, chosen by May Swenson. She lives in Winthrop, Massachusetts.

Brenda Hillman teaches at St. Mary's College in Morgana, California. Her second collection of poetry, *Fortress*, was published by Wesleyan University Press last year.

David Mamet is the author of *Speed-the-Plow* and many other plays.

Donna Masini lives in New York City. Her poems have appeared in *High Plains Literary Review*, *Pequod*, and *Thirteenth Moon*. She was a 1986 recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts grant in poetry.

Sandra McPherson's most recent collection of poems is *Streamers* (Ecco Press, 1988). She directs the creative writing program at the University of California at Davis.

Karen Murai lives in Chicago. She has received an Illinois Arts Council literary award and her poems have appeared in *Under 35: The New Generation of American Poets*.

Bin Ramke's most recent book is *The Erotic Light of the Gardens* (Wesleyan University Press, 1989). He directs the writing program at the University of Denver and edits the Contemporary Poetry Series for the University of Georgia Press.

Christopher Reid is the author of *Arcadia* (Oxford University Press), *Pea*

Soup (Oxford University Press), and *Katherina Brac* (Faber and Faber).

Mark Rudman's new book, *The Nowhere Steps* (Sheep Meadow Press/Consortium) will be published later this year. He is the author of *By Contraries: Poems 1970–1984* and has translated *Memories of Love*, a collection of the selected poems of Bohdan Boychuk. He teaches writing at New York University and Columbia and is the editor of *Pequod*.

Joe Sheerin was born in Leitrim, Ireland, in 1941. His publications include *Poetry Dimensions 5* (Faber and Faber, 1982) and *A Crack in the Ice* (Dolmen, 1985), and his work was included in *The Long Embrace: 20th Century Irish Love Poetry* (Blackstaff, 1988).

Franz Wright's poetry is included in the new edition of the *Longman Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*. His second collection, *Entry in an Unknown Hand*, was published by Carnegie Mellon in 1988.

FEATURE

Robie Macauley's books include two novels, *The Disguises of Love* and *A Secret History of Time to Come*, a collection of short stories, *The End of Pity*, and a work of criticism, *Technique in Fiction*. *The Seven Basic Quarrels of Marriage*, a work of nonfiction, will be published next year by Random House.

INTERVIEWS

John Kenny Crane is Dean of the School of Humanities and the Arts at San Jose State University. He has published critical studies of T. H. White and William Styron, as well as a history of William Faulkner's mythical country entitled *The Yoknapatawpha Chronicle of Gavin Stevens*. His novel *The Legacy of Ladysmith* was published by Simon and Schuster in 1986.

Shusha Guppy is the London editor of *The Paris Review*, and a regular contributor to *The Daily Telegraph*, *British Vogue*, and other periodicals. She is the author of *The Blindfold Horse*, an autobiographical work. *Looking Back*, a collection of interviews with some of the *grandes dames* of European letters, will be published by Paris Review Editions in September 1990.

Jason Weiss lives in New York City. His interviews have appeared in *Grand Street* and previously in *The Paris Review*. His first novel, *Nature's Way*, will be published in 1991.

ART

Jean Michel Basquiat was born in Brooklyn in 1960 and died in New York in 1988. During his short but meteoric career, Basquiat gained wide acclaim and exhibited internationally.

Ashley Bickerton was born in Barbados, West Indies, in 1959, and lives in New York. Recent exhibitions of his work have been held at Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles, and Sonnabend Gallery, New York.

Meyer Vaisman was born in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1960, and lives in New York. His paintings have been shown recently at Sonnabend Gallery, New York.

The Paris Review is pleased to announce that:

- Jorie Graham's poem "Spring," published in Issue 110, is the 1989 winner of the Bernard F. Connors Prize for Poetry.
- John Bainville's "The Book of Evidence" is the 1989 winner of the Aga Khan Prize for Fiction.

ERRATA

In Issue 112 of *The Paris Review*, the word "house" was mistakenly substituted for "housel" in the Robert Pinsky poem "The Ghost Hammer." Our apologies to the author.

We neglected to mention that Michael Meyer's memoir of Graham Greene, "A Long Game of Scrabble," which was published in Issue 112, was excerpted from *Words Through a Window-pane*. The book, which describes Mr. Meyer's encounters with London's literary community, was recently published by Grove Weidenfeld.

ART POLITICS POETRY FICTION
INTERVIEWS REVIEWS

RED BASS

in
1990

CONSPIRACY CHARGES

GERARD MALANGA: A THIRTY YEAR SURVEY IN THE ARTS

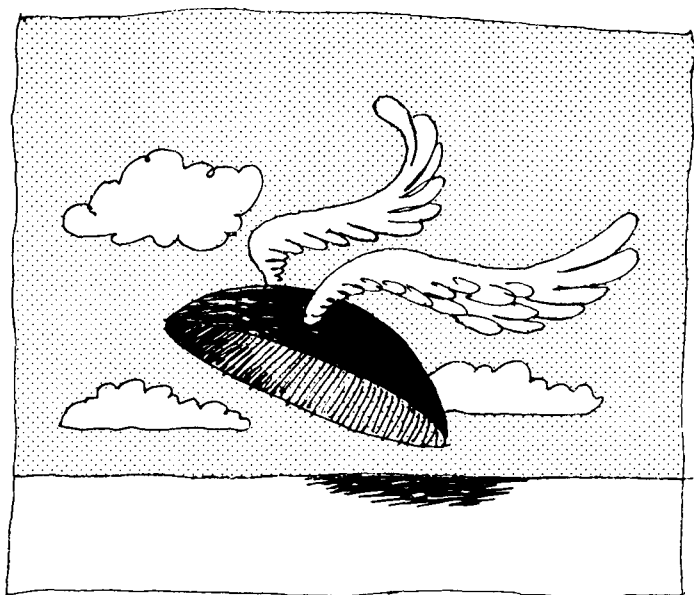
WHAT'S HOT IN HAVANA: A LOOK AT NEW CUBAN ART

Including: Luisa Valenzuela, Lynn Tillman, James Purdy, Lucian Truscott IV, Emile de Antonio, John Stockwell, Philip Agee, Judge Jim Garrison, William S. Burroughs, Victor Bockris, Charles Henri Ford, Ira Cohen, Robert Creeley, Lita Hornick, A. D. Coleman, Ben Maddow, David Bourdon, Bernadette Mayer, Daisy Aldan, David Rattray, Aram Saroyan, John Wieners, Osvaldo Sanchez, Tonel, Gerardo Mosquera, Consuela Castaneda, Flavio Garciana, Arturo Cuenca, Luis Camnitzer, Manuel Mendive, among others.

\$20 3 issues
\$35 institutions
\$35 foreign/overseas
\$7.50 sample copy

RED BASS
216 Chartres
New Orleans, La.
70130

the antioch review



Winter Issue Featuring

“Holy Headgear”

The Yarmulke — on or off?

I want to subscribe to the Antioch Review ☐ 1 yr. \$20. ☐ 2 yrs. \$38. ☐ 3 yrs. \$54.
(Foreign add \$5. per year) **Antioch Review** P.O. Box 862 Farmingdale, NY. 11737-0862
Published at Livermore St., Yellow Springs, OH 45387



"Sunrise"
by Selma Waldman

Announcing
a special double issue of
The Georgia Review

Spring/Summer 1990

Women & the Arts

For the first time in its history *The Georgia Review* will offer a double-length issue, featuring a special focus on "Women & the Arts." Our next Spring and Summer issues (which would normally have appeared in March and June) will be combined into a single number to be published on 1 May 1990. It promises to be a particularly stimulating gathering of essays about women and the arts, new fiction, poetry, and graphics by women artists, and a full complement of related book reviews.

NOTE: Only a limited number of copies will be available to nonsubscribers—and at a cost of \$9 each.* Of course all subscribers will receive the double issue as part of their basic subscription to *The Review*—and since our regular rates are so low (only \$12 per year, \$20 for two years**), prudent nonsubscribers are urged to correct that deficiency. MasterCard or VISA orders may be made by calling *The Review* offices at 404-542-3481. Send mail orders to

The Georgia Review
The University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602

* Classroom rates are available upon request.

** Please add \$3 for each subscription outside the USA. Georgia residents, please add 4% state sales tax (6% in Clarke Co.).

Unconventional, spirited coverage of culture and all the arts by writers like Alfred Kazin, Adrienne Rich, and Sven Birkerts. Major articles explore behind-the-scenes in theaters, museums, and talent agencies. Promising poets are introduced by the likes of Helen Vendler and John Ashbery. There are book reviews, commentary, and criticism. It's an experience as thoroughly rewarding as "being there." And you can have it by subscribing to the *Boston Review* today.

"...a distinctive voice..."

Leon Edel

"...penetrating and imaginative..." Victor Navasky

"...one of the nation's leading periodicals dealing with arts and politics..."

Choice

"...excellent intellectual and cultural journal... first-rate articles and the finest thinkers..."

Elizabeth Hardwick

"...one of the five best small-press magazines..."

Christian Science Monitor

"I value it...for its many astringencies and acerbities on all subjects"

Howard Nemerov

"...one of the most interesting and informative periodicals..." John Taylor

Contemporary

NOT FADDISH

LIVELY

NOT FACILE

ACERBIC

NOT INSULTING

Sophisticated

NOT SNOBBISH

LITERATE

NOT BOOKISH

Critical

IN THE VERY BEST
SENSE OF THE WORD.

The Boston Review

Fifteenth Anniversary

Special Offer

Subscribe now and receive a 17% discount on the \$2.50 newsstand price. Join thousands of the finest critical minds.

☐ Yes. Enter my subscription for twelve issues of the *Boston Review* (a two-year subscription) at the special rate of only \$25.00. My check is enclosed.

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Guarantee: You can at any time discontinue your subscription and receive full (not partial) refund of the entire subscription.

The Boston Review

33 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02111

NEW ENGLAND'S BEST MAGAZINE
OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURE.

WHAT DO ALL THESE PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON?

**CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI
FAY WELDON
MARTIN AMIS
LINDA HUNT
HARRY MATHEWS
ROLAND JOFFE
RICHARD PRICE
COLEMAN DOWELL
ANGELA CARTER
DAVID SALLE
GARY INDIANA
KATHY ACKER
WILLEM DAFOE
JANET HOBHOUSE
GARY STEPHAN
SALMAN RUSHDIE
JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY**

YOU CAN HEAR THEM SPEAK IN BOMB

**POLISHED AND SOPHISTICATED ... SOME
OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE VOICES ...
NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, 1987**

**DEDICATED TO SHOWCASING THE VERY BEST...
VANITY FAIR, 1988**

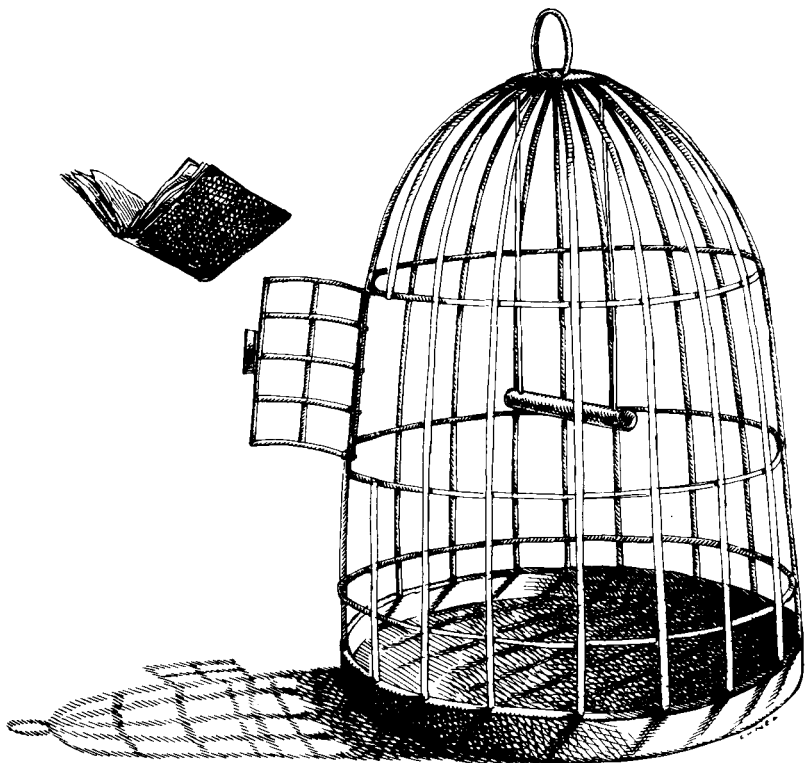
ARTISTS•WRITERS•ACTORS•DIRECTORS

SUBSCRIBE! ONE YEAR, \$16.00

BOMB MAGAZINE PO BOX 20003 NEW YORK, NY 10013

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Release Your Imagination. Read a Good Book.



You'll find hundreds of good books in *The Bloomsbury Review*, from art and literature to politics and science—and everything in between—travel, gardening, health, business, and more. **Inspiration Guaranteed.**

The **BLOOMSBURY** REVIEW

Ask for it at your local bookstore or send \$3.50 for a sample copy; \$14 for six issues (one year); \$12 each for two or more subscriptions.

The Bloomsbury Review • PO Box 8928 • Denver, CO 80201

Illustration by JOHN CUNEO © 1990

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An invitation to subscribe to the most compelling intellectual journal published in The United States.

The New York Review of Books is offering a special, introductory subscription which brings you a full year of issues (22 in all) for only \$18.95—a \$18.55 saving on the regular subscription rate. *The Review* is known internationally for its brilliant reviews and essays by Gore Vidal, John Updike, Elizabeth Hardwick, Milan Kundera, Susan Sontag, Joseph Brodsky, V.S. Naipaul, Nadine Gordimer, and countless other writers and scholars who are themselves a major force in contemporary literature and thought.

This special invitation is entirely risk-free—a full refund of the subscription cost is guaranteed at anytime during the year—and you keep all issues received with our compliments. So do subscribe now and find out why *Esquire* calls *The Review* “the premier literary-intellectual journal in the English language.”

The New York Review of Books

Subscriber Service Dept., P.O. Box 940, Farmingdale, New York 11737

Please enter my subscription to *The New York Review of Books* for a full year, 22 issues, at the special introductory rate of \$18.95—almost 50% off the regular subscription price and a saving of over \$30 on the newsstand price.

Name _____

Address _____

P04

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

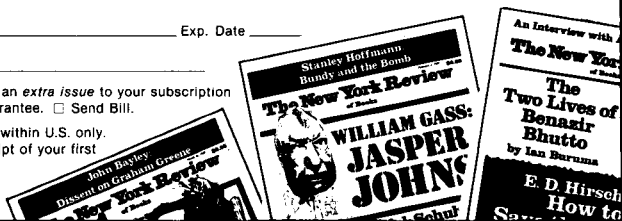
☐ \$18.95 enclosed. Or charge my ☐ American Express ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa

Acct. No. _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Your paid or charge order adds an *extra issue* to your subscription without charge. Full refund guarantee. ☐ Send Bill.

Offer good for new subscribers within U.S. only.
Please allow 6-8 weeks for receipt of your first copy.



"One of the best literary magazines in the country. . . a national treasure"

Frank Conroy

"Our leading literary quarterly"

The Boston Globe

"Palpably exciting"

The Washington Post



Ploughshares

**Cultivating a new
generation of writers**

Read It and Reap

Since 1971, *Ploughshares* has been committed to providing its readers with dynamic literary perspectives. To this end, the paperback magazine has had a different writer edit each issue, becoming, in effect, a unique anthology series. Some of these guest editors have included Raymond Carver, Tim O'Brien, Derek Walcott, Jayne Anne Phillips, Seamus Heaney, Tess Gallagher, and James Carroll. Personal visions, diversified aesthetics, with one common agenda: to discover new talent.

Spirited and provocative, *Ploughshares* consistently harvests the best in contemporary fiction and poetry.

Subscriptions: \$15/1 year, \$28/2 years, \$42/3 years.

Institutions, \$18/year. Add \$4/year for international.

Start ☐ Fall.....Fiction ☐ New
with: ☐ Winter...Poetry ☐ Renewal
 ☐ Spring...Fiction and poetry ☐ New Address

Usual schedule. Occasionally special issues.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Zip _____

\$24/year for yourself and a friend. Gift announcement.

Send with check to: *Ploughshares*, Emerson College, 100 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02116. (617)926-9875

Arnold Rampersad on V.S. Naipaul
Denis Hollier on Picasso
Masao Miyoshi, "Japanese Cultural Discourse"
Joan Dayan, "Caribbean Cannibals and Whores"
Stephen Greenblatt on witchcraft
John Hollander, "The Naming and Blaming of Cats"
Frank Lentricchia on Don DeLillo

RARITAN

A Quarterly Review edited by Richard Poirier

**Cutting across intellectual disciplines
and exploring the boundaries of new ones**

Subscriptions: ☐ \$16/one year ☐ \$26/two years

Make checks payable to RARITAN, 165 College Ave., New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Sorry, we cannot bill.

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

**Subscribe now and receive a free copy of
The Selected Letters of William James
edited and introduction by Elizabeth Hardwick**

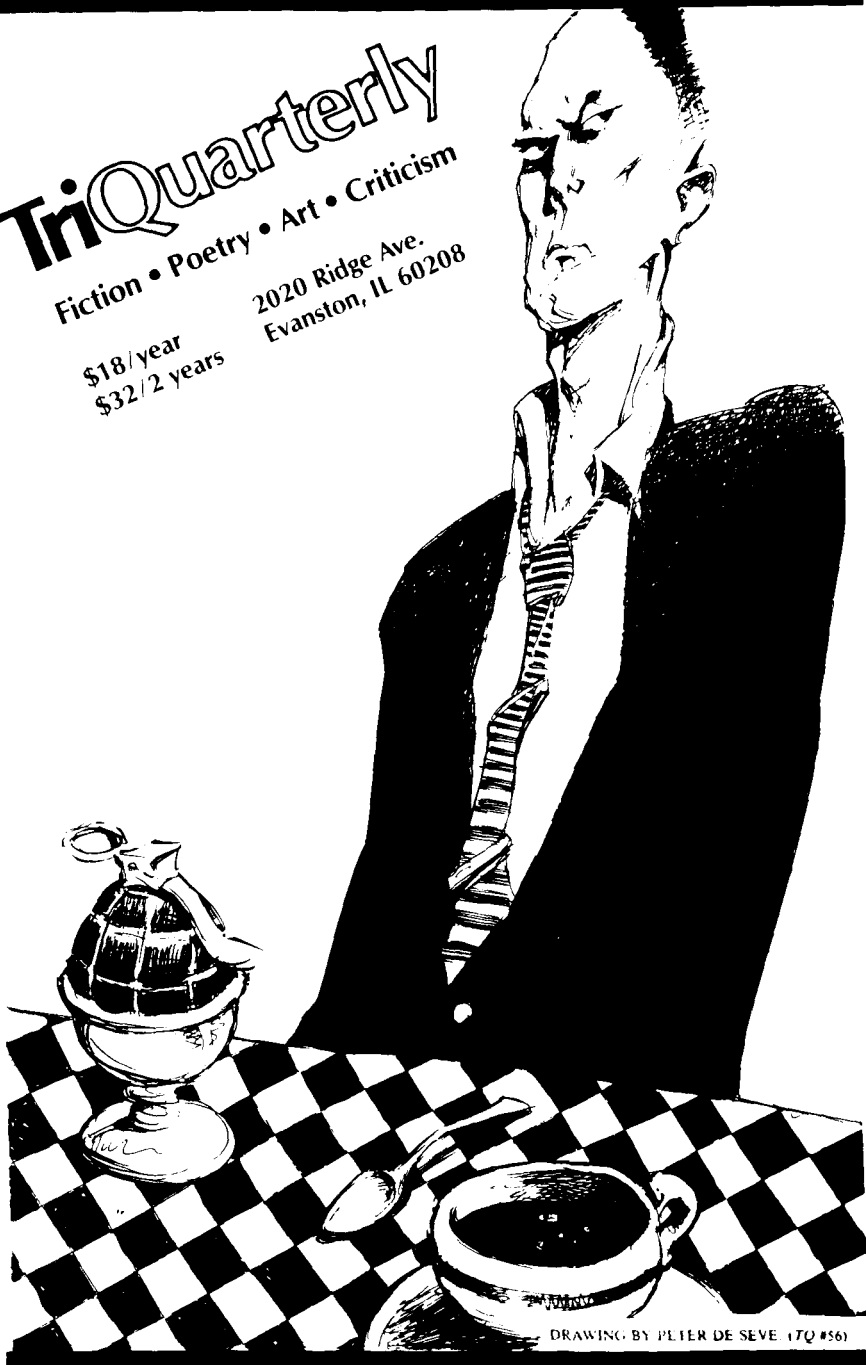
TriQuarterly

Fiction • Poetry • Art • Criticism

\$18/year

\$32/2 years

2020 Ridge Ave.
Evanston, IL 60208



DRAWING BY PETER DE SEVE (TQ #56)

These are some of the people
who have written for

Partisan Review

Lionel Abel, Hannah Arendt, Raymond Aron, John Ashbery,
W.H. Auden, James Baldwin, Donald Barthelme, Roland Barthes,
Samuel Beckett, Daniel Bell, Saul Bellow, Peter Berger, Isaiah Berlin,
Harold Brodkey, Peter Brooks, Robert Brustein, Albert Camus, Cyril
Connolly, Morris Dickstein, T.S. Eliot, Michel Foucault, Helen
Frankenthaler, William Gass, Allen Ginsberg, Nathan Glazer, Eugene
Goodheart, Clement Greenberg, Peter Handke, Elizabeth Hardwick,
John Hollander, Sidney Hook, Richard Howard, Irving Howe, Franz
Kafka, Frank Kermode, Arthur Koestler, Leszek Kolakowski, Irving
Kristol, Milan Kundera, Edith Kurzweil, Doris Lessing, Mario Vargas
Llosa, Robert Lowell, Dwight Macdonald, Norman Mailer, Bernard
Malamud, André Malraux, Steven Marcus, Mary McCarthy, James
Merrill, Leonard Michaels, Hans Morgenthau, Robert Motherwell,
Vladimir Nabokov, Joyce Carol Oates, George Orwell, Amos Oz,
Cynthia Ozick, Octavio Paz, William Phillips, Marge Piercy, Norman
Podhoretz, Barbara Rose, Harold Rosenberg, Philip Roth, Jean-Paul
Sartre, Meyer Schapiro, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Roger Shattuck,
Ignazio Silone, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Andrei Siniavski, Susan
Sontag, Stephen Spender, William Stafford, William Styron, Lester
Thurow, Michel Tournier, Diana Trilling, Lionel Trilling, Robert
Penn Warren, Leon Wieseltier

Why don't you become one of our readers?

PARTISAN REVIEW

236 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215

☐ Enter my subscription

☐ 1 year at \$18.00

☐ 2 years at \$33.00

☐ Extend my subscription

☐ Institutional rate \$28.00

☐ 3 years at \$47.00

☐ Please bill me

☐ MasterCard

card #

expiration date

☐ My check is enclosed

☐ VISA

card #

expiration date

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

CRAZYHORSE

poetry & prose

Lee K. Abbott
Ai
Jon Anderson
John Ashbery
Marvin Bell
Robert Bly
Philip Booth
Christopher Buckley
Frederick Busch
Raymond Carver
Michael Cimino
Philip Dacey
Nicholas Delbanco
Stephen Dobyns
Susan Dodd
Norman Dubie
Andre Dubus
Stephen Dunn
Pam Durban
Russell Edson
John Engels
Carolyn Forché
H. E. Francis
James Galvin
Albert Goldbarth
Jorie Graham
Linda Gregg
Edward Hirsch
Jonathan Holden
Garrett Kaoru Hongo
Richard Hugo
Mark Jarman
Laura Jensen
Denis Johnson
Erica Jong
Donald Justice
David Michael Kaplan
Galway Kinnell
Maxine Kumin

*"... an indispensable literary
magazine of the first order."*

—Raymond Carver

*"... among those magazines in
which our national literature is
carried forward."*

—Stanley Plumly

*"When I first read a copy of
Crazyhorse, I immediately submitted
a story. I was impressed not only by
the writers published in the magazine,
but also by its beauty."*

—Andre Dubus

*"... one of our most sustaining
literary magazines."*

—Edward Hirsch

Sydney Lea
Denise Levertov
Philip Levine
Larry Lewis
Gordon Lish
William Logan
Thomas Lux
Bobbie Ann Mason
William Matthews
Jerome Mazzaro
Sandra McPherson
Robert Mezey
Herbert Morris
Steve Orlen
Greg Pape
Stanley Plumly
Leon Rooke
Vern Rutsala
Reg Sauer
Sherod Santos
Charles Simic
Louis Simpson
Dave Smith
Gary Soto
Marcia Southwick
David St. John
William Stafford
Gerald Stern
Maura Stanton
Pamela Stewart
James Tate
Leslie Ullman
John Updike
Diane Wakoski
Miller Williams
Richard Wilbur
David Wojahn
Charles Wright
James Wright

Please enter my subscription to CRAZYHORSE for () one year, \$8.00;
() two years, \$15.00; or () three years, \$22.00.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Make your check payable to "CRAZYHORSE," UALR Department of
English, 2801 South University, Little Rock, AR 72204.

Is this a renewal? ☐ Yes ☐ No



The Paris Review

115th Issue

Featuring:

- Interviews with Maya Angelou, Iris Murdoch and Wallace Stegner
- Fiction by Rick Bass, Padgett Powell, Marianne Wiggins and Paul West
- Poetry by Reynolds Price and others

Available in August 1990

Subscriptions to *The Paris Review* can now be charged to your Visa and MasterCard. Simply indicate your card number and expiration date on our subscription card or order by phone by calling (718) 539-7085.

THE PARIS REVIEW 45-39 171 Place, Flushing NY 11358

Available now from the Flushing office

BACK ISSUES OF THE PARIS REVIEW

No. 18	Ernest Hemingway Interview; Giacometti Portfolio; Philip Roth.	16.00
24	Boris Pasternak and Robert Frost Interviews; Gina Bernault.	9.50
25	Robert Lowell Interview; Hughes Rudd. X. J. Kennedy	9.50
26	Marianne Moore and Ilya Ehrenburg Interviews; Malcolm Lowry. Mailer.	9.50
30	S. J. Perelman and Evelyn Waugh Interviews; Niccolò Tucci. 22 poets.	9.50
33	Lillian Hellman Interview; R. V. Cassill. Jeremy Lerner. Robert Creeley.	8.00
34	De Beauvoir and Yevushenko Interviews; Harry Mathews. Gary Snyder.	8.00
35	William Burroughs Interview; Irvin Faust. Leonard Gardner. Ron Padgett.	8.00
36	Saul Bellow Interview; William Styron. Robert Duncan. Barbara Guest.	8.00
37	Allen Ginsberg and Cendrars Interviews; Charles Olson. Gary Snyder.	8.00
38	Arthur Miller Interview; "Lowry in England;" James Salter. Leroi Jones.	8.00
39	Edward Albee and Harold Pinter Interviews; E. E. Cummings Letters.	8.00
41	Vladimir Nabokov Interview; Kenward Elmslie. Philip Whalen. John Ashbery.	8.00
44	Creeley and I. B. Singer Interviews; James Salter. Diane di Prima.	7.00
45	John Updike Interview; Edward Hoagland Journal. Tom Vetch. Richard Brautigan. Bill Berkson. Ron Padgett. Frank O'Hara.	9.50
46	John Dos Passos Interview; Thomas M. Disch. Ted Berrigan. Kenneth Koch.	7.00
47	Robert Graves Interview; Ed Sanders. Robert Creeley. Tom Clark.	7.00
49	Charles Olson Interview; Frank O'Hara. James Salter.	7.00
50	Georges Sefers Interview; John Ashbery. Kenward Elmslie. James Schuyler.	7.00
62	James Wright Interview; Joe Brainard. Christo Portfolio	7.00
63	J. P. Donleavy and Steinbeck Interviews; Louis Simpson. Robert Bly.	7.00
64	Kingsley Amis and P. G. Wodehouse Interviews; Diane Vreuls. Thomas M. Disch.	7.00
66	Stanley Elkin Interview; Richard Stern. W. S. Merwin.	7.00
67	Cheever and Wheelock Interviews; Maxine Kumin. Aram Saroyan.	7.00
68	William Goyen Interview; John Updike. William Stafford.	7.00
69	Kurt Vonnegut Interview; William Burroughs. Ed Sanders. John Logan.	7.00
70	William Gass Interview; Peter Handke. William S. Wilson. Galway Kinnell.	7.00
72	Richard Wilbur Interview; Joy Williams. Norman Dubie	7.00
73	James M. Cain and Anthony Powell Interviews; Dallas Wiebe. Bart Midwood.	7.00
74	Didion. Drabble and Oates Interviews; Vincente Aleixandre Portfolio. Max Apple	7.00
75	John Gardner and Irwin Shaw Interviews; Handke Journal. Andre Dubus.	7.00
	James Salter. Thom Gunn. Seamus Heaney.	7.00
76	Ignatow. Levi. Rhys Interviews; Jean Rhys Memoir Louis Simpson.	7.00
77	Stephen Spender Interview; Mark Strand. Joseph Brodsky. Philip Levine.	7.00
78	Andrei Voznesensky Interview; Voznesensky/Ginsberg Conversation; Edie Sedgwick Memoir; T. Coraghessan Boyle. Tom Disch. Odysseus Elytis.	7.00
79	25th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE: Rebecca West Interview; Paris Review Sketchbook; Hemingway. Faulkner. Southern. Gass. Carver. Dickey. Schuyler. Gellhorn/Spender/Jackson Correspondence	10.00
80	Barthelme. Bishop Interviews; Reinaldo Arenas. J. D. Salinger Feature.	6.00
81	T. Williams. P. Bowles Interviews; Wiebe. Atwood. Federman Fiction; Montale Poetry.	18.00
82	C. Fuentes. G. Garcia Marquez Interviews; Cortazar. Joy Williams. Kincaid Fiction.	7.00
83	J. Brodsky. S. Kunitz Interviews; Gerald Stern/B. F. Connors Prize Poetry.	9.50
84	P. Larkin. J. Merrill Interviews; T. C. Boyle. Edmund White Fiction.	6.00
85	M. Cowley. W. Maxwell Interviews; H. Brodkey. Bill Knott Poetry.	6.00
86	E. Caldwell. P. L. Travers Interviews; C. Nova. N. Mailer. J. McInerney Fiction. Language Poetry Feature.	6.00
87	Heinrich Boll. C. Infante Interviews; Milosz. C. K. Williams Poetry.	6.00
88	Nadine Gordimer. R. Carver Interviews; G. Hill. H. Nemerov Poetry; J. McCourt. L. Davis Fiction. Lady Diana Cooper Feature.	6.00
89	James Laughlin. May Sarton Interviews; F. Bidart Poetry; Zelda Fitzgerald Feature.	6.00
90	John Ashbery. James Laughlin Interviews; C. Wright Poetry; E. Garber Fiction.	6.00
91	J. Baldwin. E. Wiesel Interviews; Morand. R. Wilson Fiction; Ciampitt Poetry.	6.00
92	M. Kundera. E. O'Brien. A. Koestler Interviews; E. L. Doctorow Fiction	6.00
93	THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE: Roth. Ionesco. Cortazar Interviews; Rush. Boyle Fiction; Brodsky. Carver Poetry.	7.00
94	J. G. Ballard. R. Fitzgerald Interviews; L. Woiwode Fiction; Warhol Photo Feature	9.50
95	J. Barth. W. Meredith Interviews; Erdrich. Gurganus. Yourgrau Fiction; Hacker Poetry.	9.50
96	E. Hardwick. R. Lehmann Interviews; P. Auster. T. Gallagher Fiction; S. Olds.	9.50
	G. Kinnell Poetry; J. Flanner. S. Spender Features.	9.50
97	J. Hollander. T. McGuane Interviews; J. Dickey. J. Kosinski Features; S. Dixon. W. Kittredge Fiction; C. Wright Poetry.	7.00
98	L. Edel. R. Stone Interviews; R. Stone Fiction. L. Edel Feature.	8.00
99	A. Robbe-Grillet. K. Shapiro Interviews; E. Tallent Fiction; D. Hall Poetry	6.00
100	DOUBLE HUNDREDTH ISSUE: J. Hersey. J. Irving Interviews; N. Gordimer. A. Munro. M. Robinson Fiction; J. Merrill. C. Milosz Poetry.	10.00
103	F. Gray. W. Percy Interviews; James Jones Feature; W. Styron Fiction; J. Brodsky. R. Dove Poetry.	6.00
104	A. Brookner. P. Taylor Interviews; W. Kittredge. J. Lasdun Fiction; P. Levine. C. Wright Poetry; Beckett Feature	6.00
105	H. Calisher. W. Gaddis Interviews; B. Okri Fiction; A. Zagajewski Poetry	6.00
106	THIRTYFIFTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE: D. Lessing. M. Yourcenar Interviews; C. Smith. Fiction; C. Logue Poetry; W. Styron. W. C. Williams Features.	10.00
108	A. Hecht. E. White Interviews; C. Baxter. J. Kaufman Fiction; S. Olds Poetry	6.00
109	J. Mortimer. T. Stoppard Interviews; W. Burroughs. S. Minot Fiction; H. Mathews. C. Simic Poetry.	6.00
110	R. Davies. W. Trevor Interviews; T.C. Boyle. D. Johnson. E. O'Brien Fiction; C. Tomlinson Poetry.	6.00
111	J. Fowles. A. Fugard. E. Spencer Interviews; N. Tucci. A. Gurganus Fiction; M. Proust. R.M. Rilke Translations	6.00
112	W. Kennedy. J. Skvorecky Interviews; B. Malamud. F. Maspéro Fiction; G. Perec. R. Pinsky Poetry	6.00
113	M. Frisch. M. Puig. C. Wright Interviews; J. Banville. N. Gordimer Fiction; J. Graham. E. Hirsch Poetry	6.00

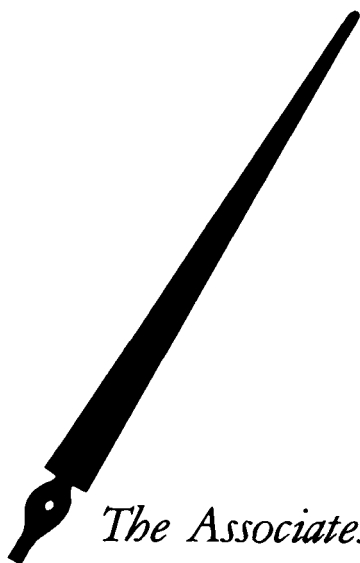
Issues 1-8, 81. Limited number available. Please inquire

Issues 9-23, 42, 43 are available upon request

Please add \$150 for postage and handling of up to 2 issues; \$2 75 for 3 to 5

Payment should accompany order. For orders outside the U.S. please double the shipping costs. Payments must be in U.S. currency.

Address orders to: 45-39 171 Place, Flushing, N.Y. 11358

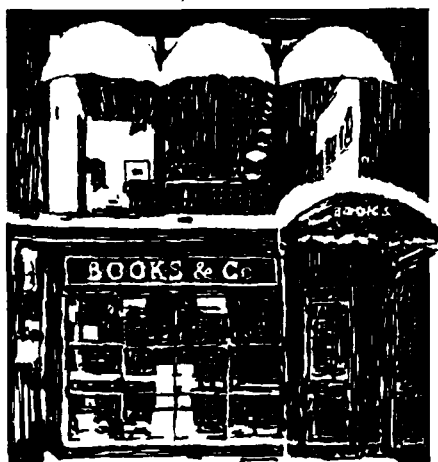


The Associates of The Paris Review

The Associates of The Paris Review are those organizations and individuals whose support helps make publication of The Paris Review possible.

ALAN AND ARLENE ALDA
BROOKE ASTOR
BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB, INC.
ETHELYN ATHA CHASE
MARGARET COOK
COORDINATING COUNCIL OF LITERARY MAGAZINES
SAGE AND JOHN COWLES
DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC.
HAYDEN (SID) FINCH
DRUE HEINZ
DR. WILLIAM KATZ & SUSAN STANTON KATZ
MATTEL ELECTRONICS
NEIL A. McCONNELL
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS
WILLIAM S. PALEY
THE PLAYBOY FOUNDATION
HAMILTON F. RICHARDSON
EDWARD ST. GEORGE
SCRIPPS-HOWARD FOUNDATION
FRANCIS ALBERT SINATRA
THE STANTON FOUNDATION
FRANK AND DOMNA STANTON
EDWARD S. STEWART
MRS. JOHN HAY WHITNEY

Inquiries about becoming an Associate should be directed to
The Editors, The Paris Review, 541 East 72nd St., New York, New York 10021



“The one way of tolerating
existence is to lose oneself in
literature as in a perpetual
orgy.”

—Gustave Flaubert,
in a letter, 1858

B·O·O·K·S & Co.

939 Madison Avenue
New York City 10021

'phone (212) 737-1450